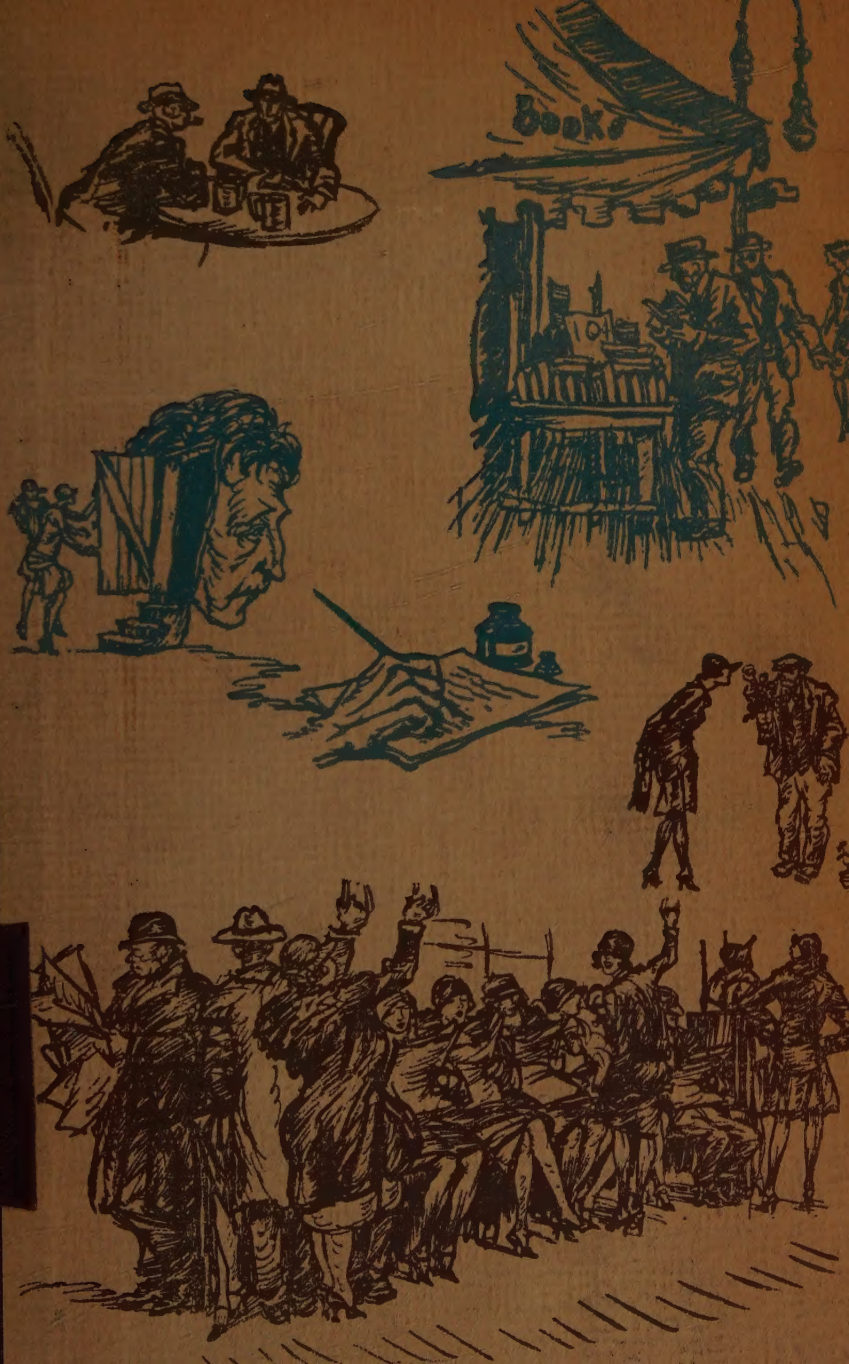
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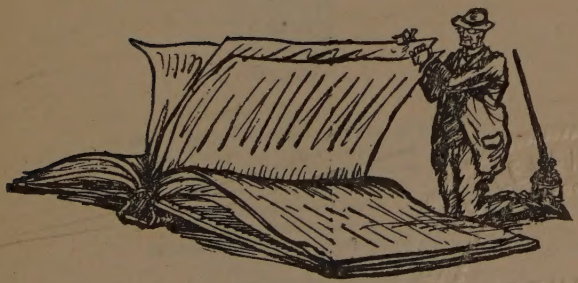

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

THE MAGIC INITIALS

C. E. M.

"Not ruled by fear or desire
And you could believe what he said."

Words must have been made by man for telling about quite small delights only, and lighting the dim spaces between people who did not know how to be friends.

—C. E. MONTAGUE, *The Morning's War.*

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OFF THE DEEP END

SHE'S what yachtmen call one of the 12's; which means, I think, that she measures twelve meters on the water-line. But I won't be too sure about that, for the lingo of scientific yachting is full of conventional and arbitrary terms. As education for a philosopher I recommend a deepwater voyage in a racing craft on her maiden trip. For here is a beautiful plaything, a perfect theory, an algebraic equation of stresses (or guesses) and strains, existing previously in blue-prints only, suddenly put out to earn her first offing in the dirty weather of the Nova Scotia coast. It is Jonathan Edwards embarking on life in some gay abstraction about the Fall of Man. Do you wonder that when you go to sea in a paradox, an hypothesis, and she weathers it all, comes through, you love her? I am not skilful enough to conjure up all the fabulous essence of that voyage; but if you'll be patient I'll tell about it as it comes to me. I see her again, a white fancy in the opal shine of noon, as the tug *Togo* cast us off in the fog of Halifax bay. New, untried, with stiff gear and 1952 square feet of canvas and all her pretty little brass winches still unverdigrised by salt. A doctrine, an ecstasy, a theory going out with a letter of introduction to Fact. Yes, the right place for a philosopher!

So I won't be sure about her water-line, but her long beautiful overhang, almost identical forward and aft, gives her 69½ feet over-all. If you lie on deck looking overstern (in a gentle weather) and see how smoothly she slips through water, you'll perceive that she's more than mere theory. Afloat in calm, with her white canvas up, she looks like a figure drifted from the pages of Euclid. Perhaps the idea is to make these racing craft as near an isosceles triangle as possible. Her tall mast (incredibly, terrifyingly tall to one accustomed only to knockabout craft: 80 feet above deck, 8 feet below) is stepped nearly amidship; and with Marconi rig (a triangular mainsail, no gaff) and a boom that does not project outboard you can imagine her an almost perfect segment of a huge circle. Her fore and back stays are the radii, her white hull the curve of the arc. To one all ignorant of racing boats everything about her in rig and gear was an astonishment. But certainly the internationalist finds her a good omen, for she was planned by a famous New York designer, built in Germany, her canvas is signed by Ratsey of Cowes and she was delivered in Halifax. *Iris,* her name, and I expect you'll see her picture in the rotogravures, leaning flat over in some gusty racing weather on Long Island Sound. The Commodore will be at the tiller and the New York Yacht Club pennant aloft. I hope it'll be the same pennant and not a new one: the little flag that whipped away four inches of its length in that wind we had off Cape Sable.

I shall always associate the adventure, in a left-handed way, with Edmond de Goncourt; who would, incidentally,

have been a good man to record it. He would have felt all its suggestions to the full, but how he would have hated it. The lover of Parisian cafés and salons, the endless gossiper upon æsthetic niceties, devotee of the lamplit foolscap and the leisurely phrase, how delightfully ill he would have been and how unhappy in oilskins. As I write this, I get out my Halifax oilies again, to smell them and try to imagine what de Goncourt would have thought of that fascinating horrid whiff. To get it at its best, of course, you must be prodded up at 3 A.M. to go out for the dawn watch—the lobster trick as newspaper men used to call it. Gaping, sodden, stupefied, heavy in half a dozen layers of clothing, propped against the bulkhead of a reeling cabin, colder than the eye of Calvin Coolidge (such was the irreverent phrase we invented to describe the gray water of New Scotland) you stumble into those clammy crinkly gelatinous yellow overalls. And you will never do it without an ironic thought of their trade name. BANKER'S IDEAL is the phrase stamped on them; and you think of various merry bankers of your acquaintance, warm in their beds to looard of Park Avenue. Of course it's a different kind of banker that the oilskin merchant has in mind: the fisherman of the Grand and lesser banks. But thereafter, if ever you're inclined to complain of the heat, you can summon up that smell, and see the patient Commodore (a great contemner of sleep) outlined against a speckle of stars waiting to be relieved at the helm. De Goncourt, I believe, would not have been at his best. There is no reason for my bringing him into the picture, except that his Journal (a copy of

which I had just found at Mendoza's) was the book I took along to read on board the *Nerissa,* the comfortable Red Cross ship that took us to Halifax. But in the *Iris* de Goncourt remained on the shelf unread. I used to see him there and think how unhappy he would have been. He was too sensitive. He describes how once, travelling in a railway train, he saw seven Englishmen wind their watches simultaneously, in a sort of automatic unison. The symbolic horror of this made him feel quite ill, so much so that he moved to another compartment.

It was in the *Nerissa,* during the two-day run to Halifax, that my spirit, always a lively foreboder, became aware of the fact that there is a great deal of water between Long Island Sound and Nova Scotia. Yet one did not brood this excessively, for as one shipmate remarked, when the voyage was first discussed, "the bar opens as soon as she gets to City Island." And let it be affirmed here that if there should be in this narrative any reference to gentlemanly potations, all were strictly legal. For aboard the *Nerissa* (why is not the Red Cross Line more advertised?) you are in a British steamship; and in Halifax, though it is a dry town, there is an admirable government warehouse, the Vendors' Stores, where with perfect legality Ships' Medical Supplies may be taken on for the comfort of the crew of seagoing vessels of over 26 tons. Duly signed on as Able Seamen in the consul's office, the Commodore's associates were justified in expecting fortification in case of emergency. Only a madman, it is my conviction, goes to sea without some Jamaica rum in his locker. And equally, only a madman drinks other than

medicinally while actually navigating. The sea is not kind to tipplers.

The efficacy of this adventure, as education in philosophy, lay partly in its complete contradiction of the student's customary way of life. The Commodore and the Personal Representative (this latter so-called because an associate of the boat's designer) were lifelong yachtsmen. Even the Younger Generation, so to identify the junior member of the outfit, was a man of some experience in the humours of racing sloops. But for the chronicler, though not unfamiliar with salt water, this was all a transposition into quite a different key; so much so that it operated as an Aristotelian catharsis. Even the libations were different. Yachtsmen, I can affirm, drink Martinis and champagne, two fluids that are not often on my menu. The admirable *Nerissa* is an ocean liner in miniature. If the *Olympic* were to calve (or yean) in midsea, *Nerissa* or her sister *Sylvia* would be the offspring. It's a girl! So there was an odd feeling in being surrounded by every evidence of ocean voyage, yet with the knowledge that we were never, by steam reckoning, very far from land. Also there was a large deck-load of cabbages on their way to St. Johns, a reassuringly earthly sight. On the other hand, there were the familiar bathtubs and lavatories of Shanks and Co., Barrhead, one's favourite maritime plumbers. So everything agreed to instil that sensation of unreality, of incredulity, which is the healthiest tonic for too docile servants of routine. And in spite of *Nerissa's* well-chilled champagne there was a queer sentiment of inversion in so luxuriously traversing

those long rollers of gray sea, those white nowheres of fog, which we were to revisit within a few days under our own canvas and our own wit. The PR, whose cabin I shared, had a great roll of blue-prints which purported to give every possible cross-section of *Iris's* comely person; he had a long inventory of her gear, from anchors down to napkins and silver. Comminuted realist in matters that concern safety at sea, I could not help reflecting that we had no blue-print nor inventory of the next week's weather. In the snug smokeroom of the *Nerissa* is a painting of Cabot Discovering Newfoundland, in a vessel somewhat slenderly rigged. One overtook oneself in a comic feeling of kinship with the hardy mariner, who was obviously glad to see land. For the object of this expedition was to make testimony, not testament.

Nerissa is a little floating island of Britain, as British ships always so sturdily are. From the bread-sauce that accompanied the roast chicken, to the after-dinner parade of the junior officers doing a marching foursome up and down the deck, not without an eye to see how any lady passengers were taking it, she is British to an extent that only an American can savour. I don't quite know why, but I shall long remember a little episode of the smoke-room. Together with those who were going to sail *Iris's* sister, *Tycoon,* we had spent a long evening in palaver. Bill, the orator of *Tycoon's* crew, was in notable form, and had held the floor to the great pleasure of all hands. His soliloquy, enriched by a bottle of champagne which was propped among the cushions of the settee to avert accident, had touched upon stage reminiscence, horse

racing, the textile industry, and a lengthy anecdote dealing with a crisis in the life of the New York Credit Men's Association. During all this an elderly Scot, sitting near, had lent an attentive silence. For perhaps two hours he sat, following Bill's humours with an appreciative but solemn eye. Finally, a pause arriving, he spoke, and there was something charmingly random in his inquiry. "What would you do," he said, leaning forward gravely, "if you were in a community where 250 men had sworn to take your life?"

"I'd get out of it," said Bill.

Iris, when we first saw her, together with *Tycoon* and several other German-built craft, was on the deck of the freighter *Lorain* which had arrived from Bremen only a few hours earlier. Securely frapped in cradles they had made the voyage without mishap, but the hoisting them off by the big floating crane *Lord Kitchener* was an anxious business. That day it rained in a way that surprised even Halifax, a connoisseur of moisture. We stood about for hours in the downpour watching while the complicated job of unlashing and lifting the hulls was cleverly done. There was a curious eagerness in those two graceful shapes as the wire hawsers were gradually unbound. *Tycoon's* blue body, *Iris's* white, like pinioned gulls. They rose slowly, hung suspended from the crane, and were lowered overside. It was strange to see them come alive then. As *Tycoon,* unloaded first, was towed away, there was a sharp crack of thunder, almost like a salute.

By the time *Iris* was unloaded, after we had had a stout

freighter's lunch of pea soup and corned beef and cabbage aboard the *Lorain,* the weather had cleared. *Iris* took the water without mishap. Riding a little high, without the weight of her big stick still to come, she dipped and swung gracefully. She knew her element. Now she was more than a blue-print.

If there were any ladies in the Halifax Hotel who wanted to do any writing that evening, they had to do it elsewhere than in the Ladies' Writing Room. For in that chamber the crews of both *Iris* and *Tycoon* dined privately in honour of their ships. That night they were captains bold in Halifax. That was the end of ease. The oilskins had been bought, and work was to begin.

Central Wharf in Halifax is a pleasant place for idling. I shall always think of it with affection as the scene of one of the best loafing days I ever enjoyed. There was plenty to be done, our little fleet of six boats were an apiary of business, but the thousand minutiæ of rigging those craft for sea was a specialized affair for experts in which I had no hand. To go to the Vendors' Stores and help select the liquor for the voyage was almost the only task I was entrusted.

After previous days of deluge this was a clearing weather, at first hazy, then warm and bright. There is something magical, as many have learned, in Nova Scotia air. It is far enough north to have in it the whiff of evergreen balsam and great untainted woodlands, the birthright of the Canadian nostril. There is the cleanness of salt-washed rocks, the iodine of seaweed, the douce vapour of not far distant fog, and (in Halifax, at least)

a delicious almost European fragrance of bitumen, the soft-coal exhalation of breakfast chimneys. And in this diapason of fragrance one sitting at ease on the string-piece of the wharf could discern small savoury grace-notes and minors: the woody tang of new packing-cases burst open, new creaky cordage, spar-varnish, rusty anchors, fish, the strong soupy gush from the galley of the rusty old *Andalusia,* a Swedish tramp just in from Jamaica. With it all was mingled the memory of two other sunny days when I had visited Halifax—once in 1910 when a boy who seems now almost unrecognizable was pleased by flower-boxes in her windows (they seem to have given that up) and once in 1927 when the *Caronia* tarried there for Sunday luncheon and the hotel waitress was shocked by our asking for a bottle of beer. But let me add that though beer is not available (except as Ships' Stores) there is a sparkling Nova Scotia cider that is as good as champagne.

So one loitered and watched our little tribe of argonauts make ready for sea. There were six in the flotilla: three 12's *(Iris, Tycoon, Isolde),* two 8's *(Whippet* and *Margaret F. IV),* and one very tiny cockleshell, the *Robin. Robin's* curator was a Russian skipper, a charming fellow who had enchanted me on the voyage up by tales of his hardships in the Revolution. He looked a little solemn as he went about the job of fledging his small bird for voyage; and indeed I think no troubles of his homeland can have been more dangerous for him than setting out in that graceful toy. But man is always at his most winning when preparing for argument with Posei-

don, who accepts no excuses. A convention of clergymen assembled in synod or eucharistic congress could not have been graver in legislating the inscrutable than our yachtsmen as they tallied rigging and stores. Not quite believing, the observer watched the tall masts of the 12's hoisted by the derrick, lowered into place. This was a day when all ligatures were cut. Nothing to do but fill one's pipe and light it, to study pensively all these oddments of gear and to think that on this or that much might depend. Friendly Mr. Warren, the Halifax shipping agent, whose approval puts the whole town at your service, took the idler members of *Iris's* crew to lunch at a peaceful old clubhouse. Here YG was first introduced to British condiments, such as pickled walnuts, which brought tears to his eyes.

The angled bastions of the Citadel make a good polygon for afternoon stroll. The fortress seemed almost deserted, as fortresses ought to be on fine days. We peered into the deep moat, considered that its cool strong cellars would make admirable vaultage for wine, and were pleased by the sparrows that nest in niches of the masonry. It is worth while to build great strongholds if in after years they afford good lodging for sparrows, green slopes for rolling children, starry ceiling for summer love. Certainly that broad hill is excellent for flying kites. And far below in the harbour the masts of the three 12's reminded us that all this was mere interlude. At this very moment the adjuster was calculating *Iris's* compass deviation. It was a good time for considering one's own deviations. Sunny air was round

us like crystal. An afternoon of pure nothingness, cast off from familiar duty, new routine not yet begun. Surely there should have been some valued thought to deduce from this. Some analogy that the whole of life itself will some day have to be so regarded, as the mere flutter of a sparrow's wing in and out of a hole in the wall? YG and I felt about in our minds for an idea and found only a large torpor. We abandoned philosophy and went to buy fleece underwear and rubber boots. That was better than philosophy, it was wisdom.

The quiet Halifax Hotel seemed specially solid and gratifying that evening. With a secretly testamentary tenderness we wrote some post-cards; we laid out and reckoned our provision of lumbermen's socks, woollen mitts and sweaters and oilskins. It amuses me to recall that we grumbled a little because the bedroom was warm, for Halifax keeps its steam going well into June. PR, who has a taste for bedtime gossip, kept me awake by telling me news about these racing sloops that he had not mentioned before. Of these 80-foot masts he remarked that they were hollow, built in longitudinal sections and glued together. Glued together! a merry thought in a moist climate, I reflected. I fell asleep hoping that the German industry in adhesives was an honest one.

Tycoon had the outside berth, so we couldn't cast off until she did. *Iris* was ready; we had borrowed *Tycoon's* nail-clipper and all hands had trimmed their fingers, always the amateur's final gesture to civilization; not mere delicacy I assure you, but preparation for dealings with tough canvas. But still we must linger (to tell you the

truth) because *Tycoon's* case of beer was late. So we lost those early airs from NW. It was towards noon before we got off. The weather was a warm hazy calm. We had to beg a tow from the tug *Togo,* to start us down the harbour. "Light Sly air" was the first entry in the log. "Sly" meant Southerly, but it might also have meant what it said. There was gentle insinuation in that weather and in the low barometer. Through milk-white banks of fog the *Togo* hauled us rapidly. She cast us off north of Neverfail Shoal. Our canvas was up. Now we were alone, we two, and could look at each other. Pearly haze thinned and thickened about us. We could see *Tycoon's* blue hull, with white waterline stripe and green underbody, leaping like a mackerel in the long swell. The high spires of canvas leaned amazingly upward; when the mist thickened we could not see the top. Running side by side we took stock of ourselves, tightened shrouds, compared chronometers. *Tycoon,* a tilting phantom of beauty, crumbled swiftly over the gray slopes. By her we could judge our own profile. Breeze came fresh from SW. *Iris* set a course for Halifax Light Vessel, a dozen miles out. *Tycoon* turned westerly along the coast. They did not see each other again until Long Island Sound.

So with magical swiftness we were on our own. A tug, in a hurry to get back to another appointment, had rushed us down the harbour and cast us off—it seemed a little heartless—into a blanket of fog. Land was almost instantly out of sight, and our consort also. A long belly-wabbling sea came rolling under our bronze bot-

tom. The chime of the Neverfail bellbuoy sounded like a summons to lunch, and from the cockpit one kept an eye on the swingtable in the main cabin. I had watched the stores going aboard. There, I said to myself, a large and frolic meal will be set out, such as yachtsmen enjoy. This was not like old days in the ketch *Narcissus* where I myself had to do the cooking. There was a steward, seasoned by years at sea, to ration us. I thought (though a little dubiously) of the lobsters I had seen going aboard. But the corner of the table, visible from the cockpit, remained bare. No one said anything about food. I was much on my good behaviour. This was my first experience of real yachting. But, in the odd way one divines things, I felt that to say anything about food would (somehow) be amiss. I kept to looard of the Commodore, for I was taught young that one does not go to windward of the skipper. But his pipe (which, waking, he is never seen without) was very strong. Until about 2 o'clock I feared that perhaps there was not going to be any lunch. After that time my apprehension was different. I began to fear that perhaps there was. But about half past four (meanwhile nothing having been said) YG appeared with some slices of raisin bread. Then the truth came out. Our steward, the hardened seaman, was ill.—We did not see him for four days.

So, without disaster, the first corner was rounded. The Commodore, of course, nothing can touch; he has the entrails of Gibraltar. But the rest of us, if we had had to face a generous meal, might have been troubled. As it was, only the captain (another lifelong salt) and the

steward were ill. But I noticed, in my own secret reckonings with myself, that tobacco seemed to have lost its charm that afternoon.

Fog came down thick, and there was a steamer whistling not far away. She was inward bound round the lightship, we supposed; but the sound of her blast might have come from anywhere in an arc of nearly ninety degrees. A small fisherman's horn, pumped by hand, seems inadequate answer to that deep thuttering groan of a high-pressure steampipe. You get a very different sense of proportion when you hear a big ship's foghorn not from her own deck but from a small craft plunging from sea to sea. Suddenly the water seems very wrinkled and gray. Those waves are slate colour, even when broken they are not white but granite; they roll you in wet wastes of fog to teach you the blessings of being warm and steady. Put your foot down now, wherever you are, and verify the good sensation of firm solidity beneath you! Such are the thoughts of the first evening, when you put from snug harbour into wind and fog and low barometer. Soon you adapt yourself; after a day or so the tumbling that bothered you becomes the perfection of all rhythms, the joyous composition of all movement. But you are not sentimental the first day out.

The surprised faces of the lightship crew, as we passed close by them, might have suggested some surprise in our own minds. Our rig was evidently uncanny to them, and I was a little grim to remember how I had last seen that vessel, from the warm forward deck of the good old *Caronia* a level August morning. For now we were

bundled up in all the half dozen layers of wool and oilskin, and chilly even so—always excepting the Commodore, exempt from all human weakness. And my testimony of the rest of that afternoon, as we zig-zagged (roughly speaking) SW and NW, must be, if honest, mostly of sleep. Such drowsiness as I have never known came down upon me. I fell loglike into a bunk and lay as one drugged and shanghaied. It was the miracle and quintessence of slumber, for one was dimly self-aware and knew how much one was enjoying it, yet too far gone for any shame or desire. One was as passive as a participle. If the voyage of the *Iris* had granted me even nothing else than that first period of swooning I should be sufficiently grateful. It was an experience. There are some of us who, in civil life, sometimes have difficulty in getting to sleep. I found myself, in this sea-stupor, chuckling at the notion of a sailor ever complaining of insomnia. There was no instant, in the first two days, when I could not have immediately gone Rip Van Winkle by just closing my eyes. Along about dusk that evening, the weather being dubious, the Commodore decided to take down the mainsail and put a trysail on her for the night; a very reasonable precaution with a new and untried vessel on a bad coast. I believe I made some meagre pretence of activity when all hands were called on deck, but whatever I did was done in pure hypnotism. I feel the less embarrassment in this confession because I noted in the long-salted PR signs of the same delicious lethargy. His bright eye, an orb as clear and humorous as a hen's, closed its lid as nesciently as any

other's. Not food nor drink nor any lure of life had the faintest appeal. One did not even unbutton an oilskin nor remove a hat. One collapsed where one was. Only the sailor, I conclude, knows how to take sleep seriously.

There is a bathtub that has a window just over it; through which, in the exhilaration of the morning sluice, when everything seems for a few moments fairly simple, one looks into the green depth and shading of a Long Island glade. Marvelling at those gradations of colour, the movement of boughs and leaves, the savoury stability of earth underneath, the good hairy grass, the cheerful esperanto of many birds, one is tempted to confess privately that land is much more beautiful than sea. It is a silly thought, for beauty is not a matter for comparisons; but it is safe to say that most praises of marine life, by whomever written, were composed after the observer was safe ashore. The sea writers I love best have always had a very handsome terror of it. Conrad, whose *Mirror* is bible and prayer-book to those who have sea-humility in their souls, tells in one magnificent chapter how he was first initiated into an awareness of its cruelty. There are essays in that book that are in the exact mood and tender humour of Charles Lamb, a parallel that may surprise you. But some of his memories commit him to a very different feeling. "And I looked upon the true sea—the sea that plays with men till their hearts are broken. Nothing can touch the brooding bitterness of its heart. To love it is not well."

So you commit yourself to the deep in a mood of piety. And the humour of the situation is that some of the

realest hardships of the sea, so I suspect, are endured not by shellbacks in windjammers, but by yachtsmen who put out in dainty craft scarcely provided against cold and wet. At least the old windjammer had a good pot-bellied stove in the focsle. One's half waking visions, in the neighbourhood of Cape Sable, were imaginings of red-hot stoves. For our steward, as I told you, was prostrate, and those who, tempted by thoughts of grub, ventured to the galley to light the gas cooker, took one breath of rich meats and returned to the cockpit to study the sky. The chronicler, usually a lover of kitcheneering sport, went privily to the icebox, intending to prepare a meal for his companions. He opened the door and studied the Commodore's generous larder. There was a royal exhalation of pork, cheese, bacon, butter, cream, and fish. He came again topside and said nothing of his impulse. But man is always perverse. Even the entire unwillingness to prepare it for himself does not prevent his dreaming of food. Was it that night—the second night out—that I had the curious hallucination of the pork chop? I think it was. Our watch was on duty from 9 until midnight. An afternoon of fog had cleared away towards sunset. The moon, nearly full, was very bright. The great white triangle of *Iris's* mainsail slanted up against the Dipper. We were making about 6 knots, on a course W. by N., there was a pleasant shearing hiss under her bow, the decks glistened silverly. There was the soft glow of the compass, set in the flooring of the cockpit; faint red and green shine where the running lights were set; a crack of cheerful brightness through the forward com-

panion where the Commodore and YG slept a well-earned watch below. PR was at the helm, and the chronicler, attempting to persuade himself that all these charming light effects counterbalanced the cold, passed into a small stupor. He was wearing canvas gloves and over these two pairs of large woollen mitts. In his trance he dreamed of a large hot well-browned pork chop. He actually felt it in his hand, tasted its good savour, brought it to his jaws in realization; and woke to find a couple of inches of cold wet wool crammed into his mouth.

Honour to whom honour! It was YG who kept the ship alive with coffee, and (after some 48 hours) broke out two cans of Campbell—one of soup and one of beans. On the third day, Cape Sable having been passed and a bottle of *Ne Plus Ultra* broached, the first health of the voyage was drunk, to the Canner of Camden. The greatest man who ever lived in Camden was not necessarily Walt Whitman. I give you Mr. Campbell of the Soups.

It was 7.30 on the morning of the first of June, so the notebook tells me, when we made Cape Sable abeam. A tall pharos dimly seen across miles of tumbling gray; as the ads used to say, a small thing to look for, a big thing to find. The log said 212.5 miles and we reckoned the first leg of our cruise well accomplished. But only two hours later we found the mainsail parting from the little brass slides that hold it to the mast. The lashings of twine were evidently not strong enough to carry so big a canvas in a wind. The kind of zipper

gear used on the masts of racing craft was quite new to me, and I confess I had my doubts about it. So the mainsail was got down, and the trysail hoisted instead, while the skipper and Charley set about lashing the slides to the eyelets with wire. We then discovered that our patent log had somehow chafed through and gone adrift. Thereafter the Commodore reckoned our speed by throwing an empty matchbox overboard at the bow and timing it to the stern with a stop-watch. Our rate of progress was not much to brag about, for with the trysail we could not get very close to the wind, and there was a heavy bumpy sea.

The starbo'lins had by this time come to consider themselves the lucky watch, probably because the Commodore usually granted them a little extra sleep. At any rate it was they who had what they will probably remember as the greatest single episode of the voyage. The three of them were yarning in the cockpit. With their usual love of ease, they were gratified that the Commodore had decided to keep her under trysail for the night. Making a course NW, she was throwing up fine showers of spray which were tinged pink by the sunset. The PR and Captain Barr were gossipping about whales; the chronicler propped at his favourite post in the companion-way where one's legs at least are warm. Suddenly the PR cried out with amazement in his voice, "By God, there he is now!" Then his sea manners came to his rescue and he repeated more formally, "Whale ho, on the starboard beam."

I was looking off to windward, meditating that that

sunset looked a windy one. I turned just in time. The other two were gaping like lunatics. Right alongside of us, certainly not more than fifty feet away, a huge dark back showed above the water. I could see the pale oily film that seeped off his skin and tinged the water. He looked as big as a submarine. We had to luff up into the wind to avoid hitting him, as he was proceeding gently right across our bow. The great slope of his chine sank quietly, and we waited half expecting to feel the *Iris* lifted beneath us. He must have passed exactly under us, for a minute or so later he came up on the other side and spouted a fountain that shone faintly in the pink twilight. He seemed very much at his ease, loitering easily in that cold dusky water; the sound of his blowing something between a hiss and a sigh. We saw him spout several times, at increasing distances, as he departed with his own proper dignity. It was all too incredible for very sharp observation. Moby Dick himself! We were silent for some time. What abysses of chill, fading from green to immortal black, does he visit in his going? What expression does he wear in his unblemished eye? We had met him in his own honourable realm; sliding, so to speak, on his cellar door. We had heard the very sound of his breathing, and had offended him not nor paid him ought but respect. Who shall say anything new of Moby Dick? Not I.

"I'm glad we didn't hit him," said the PR as after long astounded gazing we remembered the compass and resumed our course. "To be kicked to death by a whale would be undignified."

That night there were mares' tails in the sky, long skeins and streamers of cloud brightened by the moon. By 6.30 A.M. sea and wind were rising merrily. There was no talk now of putting on the mainsail. Even on the trysail the lashings of the slides were beginning to go, she was taken down and reefed. There came pouring rain and strong SW gale. The jib also we took down. Now, unless we ran with a bare pole, this was all that could be done. The glass hovered between 29.50 and 29.55.

When you speak to me of the Bay of Fundy, that is the day I shall remember. When one was below, the morale was not too good. This was now the fourth day, and what with one thing and another the cabin had not had a cleaning since we sailed. The sea had been rough and those not on actual duty had no ambition for anything but sleep. The patent German ash-tray, come from Bremen, had capsized first of all and spilled matches and tobacco everywhere. Water coming liberally through the skylights had moistened everything to a paste. *Iris,* leaping merrily among hills and valleys, was easing herself to the strain, but her chorus of creaks and groans was anxious to those below. Large consignments of ocean came upon her with the heavy solidity of an automobile smash. How wet were those brown blankets! I admit that the chronicler and YG, brooding below and watching cracks widen in the bulkheads and panellings, had a vague notion that she might dissolve about them. I remembered the German glue industry. The Commodore, coming down to examine the chart, was entertained to find his underlings suggesting it would be a good thing to seek

shelter somewhere. He was quite right, of course; we were best where we were.

But above, when one's eye grew accustomed to the size of that sea and the way she handled herself, there was real thrill. How big were the waves, people always ask? It cannot be answered because in a heavy sea the hills are too broad to allow the eye any fair scale of measurement. But you see them with a different eye from that of the passenger in a big liner. On a big ship you look down on the water and its colour seems darker. From *Iris* we looked closely into these long ridges that loomed above; we could see how coldly green and translucent they were. Every once in so often there was some particularly big comber one could mark from far away: it came striding, breaking in a crest a hundred yards long, with a definite menace written all over it. There was something unpleasantly personal about those waves. "I'll get you if I can," seemed to be their autograph. They would rise, perhaps thirty feet above us, leaving us momently in a dull green twilight, far down the hollow. Then with the soar of a rising gull, she would ride up as the great shoulder lifted her. A swirl of cream about her nose as the comber spilled a few buckets along her deck, and we gazed triumphant from the summit along leagues of water laced and wrinkled with foam. For nine or ten hours we were practically hove to, riding switchback on these big ones. Wind sang in our rigging, rafts of fog swathed us in. It was a specially big sea coming through the skylight late in the afternoon that really brought us round the corner. Several gallons of cold water soused on

the Commodore's head as he lay asleep. He sat up promptly, looked about at the foul mess in his pretty cabin, and remarked only, "Well, boys, let's clean up." Somewhat gingerly, creeping about in that frolicking hull, we did so. The sea began to moderate. Charley, our able seaman, after a long trick at the helm, could endure starvation no longer. When relieved, he dug out a side of pork from the icebox and began hacking it into chops. The sound and smell of frying began to mitigate our chills. The PR had remarked that in these voyages you fill the refrigerator at Halifax, and when you get to New York you find there's more ice than you started with. But after our first real meal in four days we felt different. There were pork chops and onions and potatoes and canned fruit. So was my vision of the pork chop fulfilled. The weather cleared enough to make an attempt at a sunset observation. Emboldened by pork chops we shook out the reef in the trysail and put up the jib. I think it was then that the Commodore was justified in making his favourite remark—"Well, boys, things are looking up."

Somewhere in those waters, perhaps still faintly perfumed by the Commodore's pipe, there is an invisible longitude, a Shadow Line, where the Bay of Fundy becomes the Gulf of Maine. For when the Commodore roused his starboard watch at 4.15—having given them an hour and a quarter as lagniappe—there was that good feeling of having turned a corner unawares, some unseen facet of space and time. There was quite a new theology in the air. Which was natural enough: it was Sunday

morning. The first thought that circulated in the chronicler's system was, "Spring's coming." For in the WNW breeze was a nostrilsome savour of pines and balsam. It smelt like graduating from Bowdoin College. This dim sea, rubricated by a full red setting moon, could not be identified by any instrument more accurate than the nose, for we had had no reasonable observations since Cape Sable. But the chronicler's nose perceived the State of Maine and vouched for it. About sun-up, still reckoning by the nostril and the matchbox log, we felt that we had more than enough northing; we tacked and made a course SW by S.

Now, with gales and chilblains left astern, was time to resume the famous mainsail. At 6.15 we took down the trysail and were ready to raise our full-page spread. I particularize the episode because it is a parable of the uses of indolence. The chronicler, always evasive of toil, was wont to give an apparent demonstration of zeal, to justify himself in the Commodore's eye. When great weights of canvas were to be handled or hoisted he could cry *hoick* (or however you prefer to spell that rhythmical groan) with the loudest, but it was mostly subterfuge. And now, while Captain Barr and Charley and the PR were lustily tailing onto halliards and winch, the chronicler was standing by (keeping that big mast between him and the Commodore) and sojering. He was pretending to be doing something, I don't know just what, but in reality he was surveying all that intricate gear with his usual questioning amazement. So it was he who observed that the bronze gooseneck, which holds the

boom to the mast, was cracked almost through. The metal had gone a sort of roquefort cheese colour and was radiated with fissures. Obviously the thing was unsafe. In that pleasant breeze and with so gross a canvas the thing would most likely snap, there would be a big boom thrashing loose and all sorts of devilment.

With reluctant hearts the company abandoned the proud mainsail for good and all. The boom was unshipped and lashed on deck. Up again went old stand-by, the trysail. And the mainsail was stowed in the Commodore's cabin where it filled all the space and where that uncomplaining commander crept in and out of his bunk like a chipmunk in a tangle of underbrush.

This was a two-hour job. Now, in the first clear sunshine and fair breeze of the voyage, we must go soberly along under storm gear. *C. G. 24*, a smart destroyerish lady in naval gray, passed near us and evidently took note of our cautious demeanour. We had, to sea eyes, much the look of a man who attended a smart wedding in cutaway garb and a golf cap. But there is one great etiquette among ships: you know there is a valid reason for everything, and don't ask rude questions. Our progress was lenient, but these royalties of sunshine were making up arrears of comfort and we were well cheered. Some half-cooked porridge was discovered, abandoned by the steward days before in the crisis of his malady. This was warmed up by YG and we felt reintroduced to civilization and food.

That sunny forenoon was notable first for a series of sextant observations. The Commodore and PR, after

calculations enduring nearly two hours, announced preliminary theories. By one of these we were somewhere SE of Portland. By another, we were on a latitude with the Isles of Shoals. This reminded YG and the chronicler of Mr. Edmund Pearson's excellent murder story, "Murder at Smuttynose" (Smuttynose is one of those islets) and in the sunny calm that fell towards noon our favourite crime yarns were discussed. From this, in the Commodore's legal mind, it was a logical transition to the theme of shaving. We did so, and there was a general renovation. Wet clothes and blankets were brought up to air. The emaciated steward was excavated from his berth in the focsle and propped up in the cockpit to air. At high noon, after a final flurry of sun-shooting, the two navigators gave out statements to the Press-box. (The Press was represented by YG and the chronicler, both concerned with journalism. YG, incidentally, confided to me that he is writing a book about Eccentrics; we agreed that this voyage should be fertile in material.) Our position was authoritatively stated as 42° 54′ N., 69° 47′ W. You can look it up on the map and see how near it tallied with nasal prognostics.

This reckoning was entered in the log as our position at Wedding Time. For it so happened that this date was the marriage anniversary of one of the company. *C. G. 24* was no longer in sight, and anyhow we were not yet in territorial waters. The sound of splitting wood was heard from the main cabin, where we had been barking our shins on those cases for four days. The other three,

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hearing the Commodore hatcheting down below, looked at each other with a sweet surmise. The shy trafficker, as Matthew Arnold says, undid his corded bales. An empty box came flying up through the companionway and fell with an agreeable thump onto the calm ripple that slid softly by. Honourable men know how to solemnize a date of sentiment. Need I insist what was the stencil on those floating jetsams? Mumm's the word.

I mark the crossing of 43 Latitude and 70 Longitude, and adjacent undulations, with the triple stars of Baedeker and other magi. By matchbox log we were making some 3½ knots. The scenery was level; the barometer reapproaching 30; the steward himself again. What a meal; and afterward to loaf about the deck, fed and warm. *Iris,* we told the Commodore, looked like Cleopatra's barge that afternoon. The trysail indeed had a Levantine look, and Nile itself could not have been calmer than the sunny drowse into which that day had blossomed. Cushions of cramoisie were strewn about—the sodden mattresses of our cabin settees. A sensual scene with so abandoned an array of socks, slippers, sweaters, oilskins, mittens, blankets, trousers. The Commodore's windbreaker jacket, yellow wool turned outward, hung spread-eagled on a line forward of the mast, like the golden fleece. Now there was time for these Argonauts, these grave Tyrian traders, "frightened with amber grapes and Chian wine," to look at one another and praise the discomforts they had known. Was Matthew Arnold ever a yachtsman? There are so many delightful lines of his that suggest a sea passion. I don't know why it is, but

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I always think of The Scholar Gipsy when becalmed in a boat. A volume of Arnold should be in every sea library against such afternoons. We had "day and night held on indignantly," and now, as that soft weather lapsed around us to golden shimmer we lived like commas in a perfect poem. It pleases me to remember that at one time that afternoon we spoke affectionately of C. E. Montague—probably reminded by Arnold, of whom Montague had lately written in the *Saturday Review*. We spoke of his exquisitely witty writing, of the great gusto of his life-long campaign for all liberal and generous causes, of his *Disenchantment,* surely one of the noblest and fieriest books of our time. Several times during this voyage C. E. M. had come into our thoughts and conversations. The first news I learned on getting home was of his death, the very day we had arrived in Halifax.

I have spoken of the *Robin,* the smallest of our little fleet that assembled at Central Wharf. Anxiety as to her welfare was pretty frequent in our thoughts. I should like here to write into the log a copy of a letter to Starling Burgess (our designer) from the undaunted Captain Shadrin, her Russian skipper. This fine sailorly document deserves applause:

I arrived at Gloucester on the 19th day of June at 11 A.M. from Halifax. I was going to leave Halifax on Sunday, the third day of June, with three other boats. While they were going away from the wharf Yacht *Whippet* broke my lower spreader, so I had to remain at the wharf until that was fixed. The 4th day of June was the King's birthday and a local holiday, so I had to wait until Thursday and at 3

o'clock that day I left Halifax. Made Sambro Light at 5:30; at sunset I was becalmed until the 6th day of June at 6:30; made about 10½ miles to Pearl Island. Barometer dropping, wind southeast, breezing up, following a heavy rain. The *Robin* was making good passage about 9½ knots per hour. Began to dip astern and took heavy sea, almost filling up cockpit. At 1 A.M., the 7th day of June, I arriver at Liverpool and anchored; blowing a gale; staying at anchor for 30 hours, and left on June 8th at 8 A.M. proceeding westward. With fair breeze and fair weather, but towards sunset under heavy northwest squalls arrived at Shelbourne at 9 P.M. Yacht *Whippet* going out of the harbour under power and I spoke her. Almost calm with heavy southwest swell running outside. That is the last I saw of the *Whippet.*

On the 9th day of June at 6 P.M. left anchorage and reached Cape Rosevay and returned back to anchorage. That night gale was blowing southwesterly with heavy rainsqualls all night until morning; many vessels arrived at Shelbourne for shelter. By the way I was sorry for my friends in yachts who happened to be out that night. Monday, June 11th, left at 5 P.M. under heavy head swell, choppy sea, and strong tide, making poor headway; anchored at Cape Negro Island on the cove for the night at 8 P.M.

Tuesday, June 12th, left Cape Negro at 7 P.M., wind northerly; made Cape Sable at noon; shifting wind, westerly, increasing sea and heavy tide rips, decided to go into Pubnico; arriving at anchor at 5 P.M. that day, weather threatening, barometer dropping, no show to proceed until the 16th day of June. Captain Red Peter was at Pubnico until the 12th day of June on the yacht *Isolde,* and left there that morning. Then I heard that he went to Tusket Island, from the Customs officer, and stayed there until the 15th of June. All well. I can't say if this report is correct.

I left Pubnico on the 16th day of June, Saturday, at 6 A.M. Fair and clear, barometer 30.15, wind north. Decided

to head across the bay. Under various adverse westerly winds I was beating across the Bay of Fundy for three days and nights without any sleep, and with much discomfort. Made Cape Elizabeth Light on the 19th of June at 1.30 A.M. and arrived at Gloucester. All well and secure. Reported and went to rest.

Throughout the entire passage I never had a chance to get on a fair slant and most of time by the wind. Made seven tacks across the Bay. Quality of *Robin* is excellent and she is very reliable and at times I fell in love with her, and can stand up in very rough weather on beam seas almost as good as any schooner; the only objection I have that she is dipping stern in rough following sea. Slight alterations on the cockpit would overcome this weakness.

I am very sorry that I did not report to you beforehand from the ports of anchorage and beg your pardon for anxiety in my behalf. I have enough experience to handle my end to the best advantage under any conditions to a satisfactory end to all concerned.

NICHOLAS L. SHADRIN.

"At times I fell in love with her." There speaks the true seaman.

We drifted W by N into a warm sunset. Still perhaps unduly doubtful of our reckonings, we drew lots as to what part of the coast we would pick up. At 6.56 P.M. we sighted Cape Ann on the port bow. But we were quite helpless in that delicious calm. We swam idly with the tide. In the dusk we sighted a small power schooner lying enigmatically offshore. With foghorn and flashlight we hallooed her, thinking perhaps she would give us a tow to Rockport; but she paid no heed to our signals. When we drifted alongside she replied to our hail with inhos-

pitable monosyllables. Captain Barr at last—perhaps unguardedly—remarked, "What you fellows doin', fishin'?" After that there was complete silence. Probably she was indeed one of Matthew Arnold's shy traffickers. It would have been fun to pop a cork at her in the dark.

We had tiptoed almost into Rockport harbour by midnight, when the tide turned and carried us out again. The Commodore was pleased, as it had always been his intention to make Marblehead anyhow. I have given you no picture of the Commodore at all unless you see him as one who likes to accomplish what he sets out for.

Marblehead, the font and chrism of New England yachtsmen, was an old story to those others; but all new to the simple chronicler. He rose through the hatch, about six o'clock of that blithe airy morning, and found *Iris* rippling through a strait of bouldered coves. One with several good hours of oblivion behind him looks dispassionately on the vigils of others, so he forbore to chaff the Commodore on the amount of tobacco ashes sprinkled along the cockpit coaming, spoor of the commander's all-night watch. The PR was making himself so busy and helpful about the deck that one suspected he also had gone shut-eye and was but newly revived. "You can take the jib in," were the Commodore's exact words at 6.18, in a tone worthy of Cabot. There was more than just the due severity of great commanders in this long vigil of his. I think he had wished to spare his new ship the embarrassment of publicly arriving in so tony a harbour under jury rig. As Emily Post, if her stocking should choose to run, so (I divine) would

Iris have felt to appear under trysail opposite the verandah of the Eastern Yacht Club. So, in the morning hush, while even the lobsters destined for Marblehead's luncheon were hardly alert, we stole in among many handsome craft and let go our hook. 4 days 19 hours 35 minutes we reckoned our passage. It was duly logged, with a small private ceremonial. The Commodore, pipe still in mouth, crawled in under the folds of canvas that filled his bunk and was off soundings at once. The others, in the imperative instinct of family men, went ashore to telephone. The stern and rockbound coast undulated gently beneath them. Bells rang in far away Long Island and all was reported O.K. Tobacco and newspapers were then sought. Teetering a little on the floor of a rustic pharmacy they read that a Miss Earhart had just flown from Boston to Halifax in five hours.

In the differential calculus of such beachcombers, family and tobacco were obviously the primary items; but these verified, next came a strong hankering for a bath. There was plenty of water handy, but it looked (and felt) unbearably chill. Across the harbour lay the luxurious quarters of the Eastern Yacht Club. Thither, with the *lavabo* cry of the psalmist, aspired the hearts of PR and the cronicler. YG, who had been up all night, asked nothing better than to be left asleep where he had fallen, in a dinghy pulled up on the public dock. But we prodded him up, assuring him that it was not well to sleep in a full beam of sun. For without him we had no clear title to the desiderated tub. The Commodore, a member of the Club, might not be disturbed. But YG, affiliated to our com-

mander, might rank as a member-in-law. To him we clung; kept vigorously nudging him awake in the soft drowsy air of June, and so made good our course into the very bathroom of the clubhouse. The Messrs. Shanks themselves, in Barrhead's deepest porcelain, never had happier ablution.

One must not melodramatize what were, after all, only very small adventures; but still the happenings of a man's mind are his own and subject to no alien supervision. In that Monday forenoon stillness, a James Russell Lowell sort of morning, in the very tissue and entity of seemly Massachusetts, we had the broad club verandah to ourselves. How green and trim was the lawn, where some sail were bleaching; how polished the brass cannon above the landing stage. On the club beach some baby brahmins, well supervised by excellent nursemaids, played with a docility rarely found in the rude urchins of Paumanok. They were making sand patties, but only to pass away the time until old enough to go to Harvard or Wellesley. The big framed chart of members' burgees, including that of the King of Spain, reminded us that for the moment we were not just sunburned casuals, we were Yachtsmen. Life seemed to be solved. Where were those cold yeasts of sea, those glimmering slopes of jade and crystal with darkness written on them? Across far water there was pointed out the blue horizon of what is called (I believe) the North Shore, home of the great mandarins of Massachusetts. There were yachts with surprising newfangled gear, such as a kind of propped-up mast; there were motor boats with evident Rolls Royce

blood in them, with glass windshields and double rudders. There was a great glass case of silverware, racing prizes. The world rode at anchor and the sea said nothing. We made comfortable arcs in rocking chairs and watched our tall white *Iris* where the Commodore lay sleeping in his canvas niche.

Our consort the *Duenna,* a stout and sea-kindly power boat, met us at Marblehead. The wind was light and contrary, so she took us in tow. There were still three days, but they were of a quite different psychology and require no special exegesis. Except when the *Duenna* (admirably named, for she chaperoned us as though *Iris's* virtue were of the frailest) left us to dart into various ports for fuel, we made the rest of the voyage at the end of a line; and a ship in tow is a mere somnambulist. This is not to say there were not many pleasures to ponder. It would be a breach of manners not to pay tribute to the dinner prepared by the resuscitated steward after we had got through the Cape Cod Canal. That night Lazarus laughed indeed. The Commodore, after a long sleep as we towed down toward the Cape, roused about 6, lit his pipe, and stated that things were looking up. He then made a further pronouncement, in regard to evening mess, that imbedded in the minds of his Able Seamen and shone there like a jewel. Hours went by, and these latter began to wonder whether this utterance had been forgotten. Perhaps it had been only a sleepy ejaculation, the syllables of a mind still half in dream. To inquire or remind would obviously have been unseemly; yet as time went on and we approached the fragrant Canal,

sweet in the twilight with aromas of sea-grasses, weedy rocks, tidal mud, sand and pine-gum and all juniper and huckleberry relishes, the younger set looked at each other anxiously. To show how ardently the mind may occupy itself with small matters, I admit that as the Commodore stood cheerfully on the after deck I kept my left ear (which hears better than the right) turned toward him, not to miss the faintest allusion to The Topic. With my left ear I heard him say something; and when YG asked me anxiously "D'you suppose he's forgotten," I was able to report that he had not.

The Cape Cod Canal, by the way, now run by Uncle Sam, seems one of the rare instances of fewer formalities when a Public Work is taken over by the federal government. In the old days of private ownership there was much more detail, fees to pay and whatnot. Now they simply ask you the length of the ship and that's all.

It was getting on towards 9 o'clock, but the Commodore hadn't forgotten. By the time we anchored off Monument Beach for the night—a quiet rainy night, perfect for sleep—we had sent fresh broiled mackerel and strawberry shortcake to their manifest destiny. We sat and ate and palavered in a tranquil glow that was not just the light of our lantern. I shall not be excessive on this topic, but the last two days were very largely concerned with grub. We had four or five empty days to catch up with. Now that there was little navigating to consider, almost at any moment some member of the company could be found eating. The PR discovered some marmalade among the stores, and remained at

table long after all others. "I haven't been eating enough marmalade in the last three or four years" was his excuse.

So with the agile *Duenna* running ahead of us like a cottontail rabbit, kicking up a plume of spray and exhaust, we came swift along. We picked up the familiar landmarks of the Sound one by one, including the two desolate masts in Fisher's Island Sound. They testify tragedy where some shipmaster missed the channel by only some 50 yards. Inland waters give one plenteous parable. The habituated landsman thinks of large bodies of sea water as a liquid subject to embarrassing up-and-down movement, but fairly stable on its base. But—as the Bay of Fundy or Long Island Sound itself will promptly tutor you—these vast masses are excessively fluid and move to and fro in the most surprising fashion. A little study of Current Tables and Tide Diagrams is highly illuminating; or a glimpse of the tide boiling through the Race, between New London and New Haven. And why, I've often wondered, does the Department of Commerce get so little acclaim for its quiet, faithful and endless work in keeping buoys, beacons and bells in constant A1 service? Consider the lives and property daily and nightly confided unquestioning to these safeguards we all take for granted as we do the phenomena of stars and weather. An occasional halloo of gratitude would not be amiss. So we thought as we saw one of the Sound lightships—the *Cornfield,* I think it was—under tow, on her way back to replace her substitute, after some refitting I suppose. It was an odd sight, and

(in the very expressive habit of ships) she had a rather surprised and shamefaced air, like a respectable matron being escorted home after a spree.

It was late in our last afternoon, our eighth day from Central Wharf. The sun came out warm and handsome, and as good commuters should we made the home waters about 6 P.M. As we entered Cold Spring Harbour we came into summer. Like stepping into a greenhouse we sailed into the warm spice of Long Island June. An astonishment of rich velvety scent, so palpable we exclaimed in surprise. There was mown grass in the air, rhododendron, lilac, arbutus, moist oak woods. We were too Saxon perhaps to say much about it, but I think a sort of Long Island patriotism took hold of us. This was something we understood and had, for a few days, almost forgotten. This was not the hard beauty of those northern granites, nor even the demure propriety of Massachusetts. The rocks were not so cold a gray; the trees not so austerely evergreen; the sands of Lloyd's Neck were warm and yellow. In the harbour the dainty little fleet of many coloured sailboats hovered like butterflies. As we came ashore we heard the twitter of birds. "Gosh," said the PR, bursting into a perspiration, "before we eat, the Commodore will have to let me get out of this Halifax underwear."

THE X IN OXFORDSHIRE

IF YOU had a map of the Cotswolds I could show you just where it is—one of those good old Bartholomew maps, 2 miles to the inch, sheet 24, Oxfordshire. There where the map turns pink (which means you're 800 feet up) and the Evenlode (which is not a mining stock but a twig of the Thames) swings round in a curve above Charlbury. The X in the word OXFORD (meaning the shire, not the town) spaced wide across the map, comes right on it; which is significant I dare say, because that is where X lives; the home of the Unknown Quantity. At least it seemed so that chill September sunset, though mind you I know as well as you do that we carry the Unknown Quantity with us and find it where we choose. But anyhow Mr. Bartholomew put the X of OXFORD just there on his map, and he never does anything random. There you will find it, *Wychwood Forest*. Its very name sounds just the way it looks at sunset. Etymology is always a chancy business: I dare say that wychwood has nothing to do with witches. My private guess is that the name suggested that the trees were bendy and flexible (as they spoke of wych-elms). But you wouldn't have Skeat under your arm when you were going through Wychwood at dusk; not even Basil Blackwell, the Oxford bookseller, would expect that.

When hoak and hash bud together, said the old rustic in the train, there's always a lot of water. When he was a boy, countrymen didn't read, they didn't get weather forecasts in the papers, they had to study the signs of nature. When the hoak and the hash came into bud at the same time, look out for a wet summer. Certainly they had it this year. The whole valley was under water. But it so happened that the one day we had for the Cotswolds and the one morning we had for Oxford were perfect. That was how I happened to see Wychwood again just in that slant of sunlight.

There is something there that Mr. Bartholomew, the wise cartographer, did not attempt to put on the map, except in so far as he suggested it with his big X. And by happy coincidence it was the well-loved author of *Right Off the Map* who took us along the road that runs cautiously between X and zero (I mean the O on the map) and skirts the western bound of the forest, just where sunset strikes it. He is a very fast driver, he took us swiftly. When he was an officer attached to Press Headquarters in France and assigned to take visiting journalists for a glimpse of desolation, they sometimes innocently mentioned some place (mentioned in dispatches) they would like to see. He always insisted on taking them there, no matter what packages were falling. They had said, in their easy Fleet Street fashion, they would like to see so and so. So they should, and did. Fleet Street has a nose for news; it's good sometimes for that sort of nose to get rubbed right into it.

But it was only sunset that was falling on Wychwood.

Sunset besieged Wychwood, marched upon it in level attack, but did not get far in. We went fast, sitting against a flux of cool evening, but one could see something of what was there and what wasn't. There did not seem to be much Now, or much you and me. A green tiffany (as Herrick would say)—a green tiffany of light, a diaper of leaves and shadow, lit the outer works of that strong place. But brightness did not strike in, save along occasional alleys sliced and gilded into the dusk. Along those ways marched ruddy troops of afternoon, they slanted in stout formation but they came not back. As H. M. T. likes to remind us, you don't have to go to the Amazon to see a jungle. The volleys of light invaded, but they did not prevail. The fluid tissue of leaves and spaces absorbed them, as the world's great fund of silence swallows up the sparkling skirmish of our radio voices. It was like Graham McNamee meeting the Sphinx.

The hoak and the hash—and the helm too, I dare say—kept their own counsel; they will bud together when they choose, insubordinate to meteorologist. But I like to remember that for a few minutes we skirted the edge of Wychwood in western lights, dipped into cool tunnels of forgotten things, identified at least one fortress of the Unknown Quantity. Those who conclude prematurely that the Unknown Quantity has his back against the wall will sometimes revise their notion. It may be that he has a wall against his back.

How pleasant a backdrop was Wychwood for the lively spectacle of Oxford on a Saturday night. More

and more, in Oxford, the Town begins to outgrow the Gown. Cornmarket Street on Saturday night is of a very changing savour. The odd thing, that I have not heard remarked, is that Oxford is growing to be a huge manufacturing city. The big motor works out at Cowley have strangely altered the balance of affairs. It would be quaint indeed if in the next fifty years Oxford should come to be the Detroit of Britain. It is far from impossible. The simple industries of the Cooper's marmalade and the Varsity basket-chair (designed to fall asleep in while trying to read Stubbs's *Constitutional History*) are no longer her only hostages to traffic. In the centre of a great factory town the college will shine like the pearl in the oyster shell. The scholar will still fish for his murex in those grots of stone, but he will also know how to convert it into muriatic acid.

So one ponders on Saturday night in vacation, when the Town is at perigee—in search of dancing and cinema. Woolworth is established in Oxford, but I told you that before. Buol's old restaurant is now called Stewart and has a soda fountain. The most atrocious pun in England (crede experto) exists on Cornmarket Street in the form of a confectionery and tea-shop called The Candied Friend. Even Logic Lane (do you know it?) has felt the new day. There is a sign: *Motorists Are Requested Not To Park Cars in Logic Lane.* There are traffic beacons on the High. When I tell you that the famous old rears at Merton have been torn down, you will know that we live now in a quite different era.

Which I do not say in any regretful spirit. Permute

her as you may, she will keep her essence. Sunday morning, in college gardens where sunny air is indented by that familiar clash of bells and rooks, you lay away your toy paradoxes and are humbly attentive to her incomparable spell. In a bookshop window you learn that the Bishop of Oxford is now Thomas B. Strong, certainly the right name for a Bishop. The little Friends' Meeting has moved, but a card says that Dr. H. T. Gillett will speak on the Epistle to the Romans, which is happily like old times. The Virginia creeper is turning Burgundy colour in the garden quad, old Churchill is still on duty at the college lodge, and the women, as usual, are taking most of the Firsts in the English Literature school. Thinking they might eventually turn out to be young Rosamond Lehmanns and Margaret Kennedies, I made a note of their names. *Nomina Candidatorum qui termino Trinitatis ab examinatoribus in Literis Anglicis Honore Digni Sunt Habiti.* . . . Two men and three damsels got their First in that examination. I made a note of their names, and one was called Kathleen.*

There was time, before we flitted, for a ramble through Christ Church meadows. There was the excellent old advertisement:—

The Meadow Keepers and Constables are instructed to prevent the entrance into the meadow of all beggars, all persons in ragged or very dirty clothes, persons of improper character or who are not decent in appearance and behaviour.

*Elaine V. V. Clark, Kathleen M. Constable, Christine L. Morrison.

To allow no handcarts, wheelbarrows, bath-chairs or perambulators (unless they have permission from the Very Reverend the Dean), to prevent flying kites, throwing stones, bowling hoops, shooting arrows, firing guns, catching birds. . . .

Another visitor, not a tourist but evidently a stranger to the colleges (perhaps one of the motor manufacturers from Cowley), was studying this notice, and he looked humorously at me as he saw me stop also. "That's got to be read carefully," he said, "to find out whether we've got any right to be here."

THE PALETTE KNIFE

YOU won't mind if this smells a bit of kerosene and turpentine and linseed oil; because I have just, very reluctantly, cleaned the brushes and put away the paint box and set aside the picture I am working on ("Portrait of a Glass of Gin"). It is a fine dark rainy afternoon, just the sort of weather I find excellent for painting. The darkness doesn't bother me at all—most of my painting is done by lamp-light anyhow, quite privily, where no one can see what I'm up to. Perhaps that accounts for the failure of some of my colour schemes. Blue, for instance: I never can get my blues clear enough, luminous.

I've kept very quiet about my paintings, haven't I? Yes, I have; and probably I shouldn't have mentioned them at all, ever, but putting away the brushes just now, and the pleasant greasy feeling on my hands, and an unwillingness to focus my thoughts on hard work, gave me a sudden impulse to palaver about my Art. Which really is an important division of my secret life. I do my writing on Thursdays and my painting on Sundays. The rest of the time I answer telephone calls. It is fine to have one's program definite.

I find that almost all the writers I know best have a clandestine affection for painting. Writing has its

merits, but it does seem—more and more, as you go on—to involve an attempt to think; and it's so devilish intangible. Whereas in painting (my kind of painting anyhow) you rely entirely on instinct and all the merrier moods of the psyche. Also a newly-finished painting smells so good; and you have to wash your hands frequently.

It began very innocently—oh, a long time ago—when my itinerary used to take me past the well-known store of Messrs. Devoe and Raynolds on Fulton Street; if there is any more alluring place in New York I don't know it. I had often bought water-colour boxes there, and crayons, and then one day I went in, and pretending I was getting it for my small boy, I bought a box of oil painting materials. I set to work immediately to make a portrait of the Brooklyn Bridge, but after a few hours' work I concluded it was impossible. Very likely I would have said so publicly, but about that time my friend Mr. Heywood Broun began to write about *his* paintings. We were both newspaper columnists in those days and there is an unwritten etiquette in the columnist profession that you "lay off" topics that other columnists have made their own. Therefore, for all these years, Art had to get along without the benefit of my comments or the narrative of my private humiliations.

Mr. Broun, I don't doubt, has made much greater progress than I, because his pleasant candour about his experiments probably brought him many valuable suggestions from practised painters. My work in oils has suffered from excessive secrecy, for I was even too bash-

ful ever to find out what the little bottles were for. One was marked Rectified Turpentine, and one Pale Drying Oil. The turpentine, I supposed, was to clean the brushes with; but what about the Pale Drying Oil? I supposed it was to mix with the paints, but evidently I was too zealous: all my early work had a sort of greasy penumbra around the edges. When the Pale Drying Oil provided by Devoe and Raynolds was used up, I found a bottle of linseed oil in the family medicine cupboard, and this seemed to do fairly well. I have also experimented with Three-in-One oil, olive oil, and one evening, when a sudden urge to paint came upon me and I could find no other vehicle, melted butter. So do all artists, I suppose, relish the backward gaze upon their early struggle. The whole problem of how oil paints are mixed and proper conduct of the implements is still a mystery to me. Once I saw a man painting a landscape down by the Mill Pond in Roslyn; I was strongly tempted to go and watch him, but knowing how alarmed *I* would be to be watched, I refrained. Yet I always had a feeling that I could do it all right—if I knew what to do.

So, for years, I made little attempt to live up to whatever hopes Devoe and Raynolds might have formed. I confined myself to pencil and crayons. Then, in the excellent way things happen, a random chance sent me back to my true ambition. Taking tea one afternoon with the admirable Mr. Hamish Miles, Titania and I had admired with full sincerity the many enchanting objects of art in his house beside Hampstead Heath. It was there, in Pond Street, N.W. 3 (as a matter of fact

Katherine Mansfield once lived in the same house, and one of the finest toy shops you ever saw is almost opposite) that a great moment occurred. Mr. Miles, with an air of epiphany, showed me two very modernist pictures in coloured chalk, framed in the hall. "Guess what those are," he said. My first notion was that they were Gauguin, or at least Jerome Blum or Marsden Hartley. Certainly they were stunning things, enchantingly decorative, humorous, and full of suggestion. And we learned that Mrs. Miles had bought them from a pavement artist somewhere in Kensington.

This did a great deal to encourage me. Certainly Mr. Miles did not suspect it, but my inward thought, with due obeisance to the unknown artist in Kensington, was that I also had pictures in my soul which I need not be ashamed to attempt. So, returning home, I took up again my brushes and tubes, and bought a fresh bottle of linseed oil. I had another look at my "Autobiography of a Chrysanthemum" (one in a very early manner), my "What a Dog Thinks About at Night." But it was in working on the picture entitled "The Birth of a Pun" that I made a great discovery—the use of the palette knife.

Perhaps I ought to describe this work, to give you some notion of my ideas of symbolism in paint. A pun, obviously, is a head-on collision between two different meanings. So the first thing you see is two broad bands of colour running diagonally across the picture and meeting in a white space in the middle. (The white space symbolizes a blank mind.) These bands of colour show

gradations of tone, for all meanings have their different shades. One band varies among orange and red, the other in tones of blue. But a pun involves a victory of one meaning over the other: so within the white area is a jagged vibration of red and yellow, rather feverish or scorbutic in effect, with peripheral striations suggesting tension. Within this again is a zigzag golden spark, the Pun itself—though not golden enough; it is too muddy. The artist, working in excitement, did not properly clean his brushes; besides, the colours *will* get mixed up on the palette.

The lower right hand area shows a rather dun and opaque territory where an assortment of mushrooms, fungi, and livid blooms is tenderly speckled. These are flowers of speech. The upper left hand region looks like a violent electrical downpour. From rolling masses of blue and black cloud discharge parallel rods of rain and stripes of lightning, directed toward the dangerous centre where the pun is nucleolating. This all represents a brainstorm. And the Pun itself not having been a success, it drops rapidly down a heavy black chute which leads swiftly to the bottom of the picture.

But what I was going to say was—in dealing with the delicate problem of depicting the brain-storm (upper left corner) I was in despair until I suddenly thought of the palette knife, for which I had never had any use. I found that by splaying this about among nice thick paint the most gorgeous effects could be produced. In a later picture, "November Wind," which shows some almost bare trees in an autumn dusk and gale, I dis-

covered that the flock of flying leaves that looked so flat and paltry when done with a brush could be nipped in with the knife blade to grand effect. And what I've been pondering ever since is, why isn't there something in a writer's kit that could correspond to the Palette Knife? Some nifty little dodge that could scatter life and dexterity into the meagre cadence of one's copy.

I haven't at all done justice to my ardours as a prentice painter—but I am too eager to get back to the "Portrait of a Glass of Gin." I intended to use, in that, some of the gold radiator-paint that gave such fine bronzy wash to the southeast corner of the "Autobiography of a Chrysanthemum." Yet I have an uneasy feeling that a merely technical trick, if once successful, should never be repeated. But if any one knows of anything, in the realm of writing, that corresponds to the palette knife . . .

BIFURCATION

I HAVE told you before about one of my favourite authors, M. Chaix, the compiler of French railway time-tables. (His name, by the way, is pronounced something like *Shecks;* or at any rate if you so pronounce it the old ladies at the kiosks along the Boule' Miche' know what you mean.) But the subject is far from exhausted. This time I brought one of his monthly *livrets* home with me. I shall keep it as a precious souvenir. If ever life seems complicated, I shall repose myself by considering the courageous way M. Chaix expounds and anatomizes the problems of European travel. The preliminary thirty pages or so of his livrets really constitute a philosophical essay on Civilization. In manner and method they are a perfect little microcosm of the French spirit. It is sad to me to reflect that so many travellers pick up their technique of voyaging haphazard, from porters and concierges and minor functioneers. They should visit the well of doctrine itself. In the beginning should be the Word; the Word of M. Chaix.

Hear him, for instance, on the problem of Customs Examinations at frontiers. I translate as strictly as possible, so you may observe M. Chaix's mind at work:—

In view of avoiding all difficulty and all delay, at the time of the passage at the frontiers, Sirs the Voyagers have interest

to make to the agents of the customs, declarations exact and complete of the contents of their baggages.

Notably there must be declared: habilimentary effects and whatever objects in a new state, jewellery, precious stones, tobaccos, cigars and cigarettes, stocks and movable values, provisions to be consumed.

In principle, the customs visit takes place in the interior of the locality arranged for this purpose in the building of the frontier station. Sirs the Voyagers are required to present at that place all their unregistered baggages and to assist in person in the visit of the registered baggages.

By derogation from this rule, and by exceptional concession, the Customs agrees, for certain international and intercirculatory convoys, to effectuate its visit in the train itself, in the course of its march or during its arrest.

This measure being taken for the convenience of the voyagers, they are expressly urged, in order to activate the operations, to facilitate the duty of the customs-agents; particularly to prepare the rapid opening of parcels and to lend themselves to the accomplishment of the formalities.

The Customs holds by law the right to visit the contents of all baggages, to proceed to an integral visit of the train or to choose one or more compartments and submit them to the integral visit, to effectuate researches under the cushions, benches, etc., without the voyagers being justified in seeing, in these measures, any particular suspicion toward themselves.

If you neglect to study M. Chaix, embarrassment is sure to ensue. Take the case of some friends of mine who embarked, one warm summer evening, in that "international convoy" that leaves Geneva at 21 hours 40, due in Paris at 9.10 the next morning. About 8 o'clock they proceeded comfortably to the station, where they

dined leisurely and well. I don't suppose there is anywhere more gratifying victual than that served in the large stations on the P. L. M. railway, and the buffet of the Gare Cornavin in Geneva is one of the best. Also these young people had a small overplus of Swiss money which they thought they might as well blow in. Exhilarated by some kind of ice-sculpture with an electric light inside it, which the head waiter was carrying about, and by the anticipation of their first night in a wagon-beds compartment, they dined prosperously. They mounted into their snug cubicle of the wagon-beds—one of those delightful cars that put our sleepers to shame, and which, with a great air of originality, our American railroads are now beginning to imitate. The berths were made up, and there did not seem to be anything to do but turn in. (The club car is an idea that the Wagon-beds Company hasn't yet thought of.)

This young couple, I repeat, had not taken the precaution of reading M. Chaix, who would have warned them that the Customs would effectuate its visit at Bellegarde, at eleven o'clock. Drowsy with vintage and victual, it seemed hardly worth while to take the trouble, in their small alcove, to open their laboriously compressed suit-cases and take out nocturnal gear. Trustful of the naperies of the Wagon-beds Company and in all Godiva's simplicity, they climbed each into a berth. Only those inexperienced in the fatigues of travel will reproach them.

All well and good. It was a dulcet moony night, they slept. But in the prime of nescience, at Bellegarde, arrive

the customs agents, banging on the door. This, apparently, was one of the compartments chosen for an integral visit. Unaware of M. Chaix's kindly warning, these voyageurs, singularly defenceless beneath their blankets, were appalled by requests to rise and open their baggages. Their modest reluctance to emerge, their anxious Anglo-Saxon orbs peeping shyly from cover, seemed to stimulate in the agents of the douane a desire to effectuate researches. There was some ominous jape uttered about *coucher* and *cacher*. It passed off into merriment, as things so often do in France; but for a few moments the victims felt rather like an illustration for *La Vie Parisienne*.

I have told you how M. Chaix's kind heart shows itself in his instructions for the transport of dogs and children, and his reductions in fare for "numerous families." The same generous solicitude appears in his arrangements for travelling invalids. It is almost worth while to be taken ill while travelling in France, for this is what you can have:—

> A wagon-saloon comprising: a great compartment for the invalid, a compartment of saloon-bed with linen, a compartment of ordinary saloon-bed, a sofa-bed, a cabinet of toilet (adjoining the compartment of the invalid and arranged to be used as a kitchen). This wagon-saloon is only rented as a whole, on the payment of the price of 16 places of ordinary saloon-bed. Ten voyagers, at the most, can take their places in this carriage.

I like M. Chaix's idea that the invalid can have ten people with him in his little saloon, to keep him from

feeling lonely or depressed. I can just see them all in there, having a grand time; the men wearing gray gloves. It is going to be awkward, though, if the malady takes a turn for the worse so that you can't travel on the appointed day:—

If the wagon demanded for a determined day is not utilized, by the fault of the voyager, until a date posterior to that primitively indicated, the Company may: either cancel the reservation, in which case the sum of 200 francs poured out as guarantee is acquired by the Company; or reserve the wagon-saloon until the new date of departure on the payment of 281 francs for each indivisible period of 24 hours.

M. Chaix's foresight for his flock covers all possible eventualities. Suppose (you know how uncertain life is) you have bought a ticket of Going and Returning, and you find you want to stay longer than you expected. Very well: first you look up the table of Durations of Validity. If your traject, for example, was one of 401 to 500 kilometres, your validity endures six days. But you have a Faculty of Prolongation of the Duration of Validity. This Prolongation may be single or double, by the payment of a supplement. But in all cases the voyager must pay the supplement before mounting the train, in default of which he will be considered as a voyager without a ticket. Be careful also (M. Chaix is helping you all he can) to make sure just what Feast Days may intervene in this period of Prolongation of Duration of Validity. If, for instance, the Feast of Branches (which sounds to

me like Palm Sunday) comes along, then your validity terminates positively at the last train of the second Thursday after Easter, no matter what the length of your traject.

My private advice to you is, Never buy a ticket of Going and Returning. It is sure to mean trouble sooner or later. Wednesday of the Cinders or Monday of the Pentecost is likely to break in, and something will happen to your validity. If you are going to a thermal, climatic, or balneary station, also, you will have to look up the tables in a special tariff.

Of course the people who buzz along in through trains miss a lot of the fun. They miss their Faculty of Intermediary Arrest; they miss all the charming courtesies that happen in a Station of Bifurcation:—

When, in a station of bifurcation, a voyager fortified with a through ticket must wait more than 20 minutes for the corresponding train by which he ought to continue his voyage, he can be authorized to go out of the station until the hour of departure of this train. In this case, the chief of the station or the agent in control of the tickets inscribes on the voyager's ticket the following mention:
Valid for Train Number.....Date.....

Obviously, unless you have at least twenty minutes, it is better not to leave the station. M. Chaix, like a true Frenchman, does not like to see you take your aperitive in a hurry.

We had an hour and a half, between trains, in the enchanting old town of Bourg, and I was wondering,

when we went out to wander a bit, what was all the autographing and pasting of little slips on our tickets. Then I realized the truth, and was thrilled. I was doing just what M. Chaix had so often been telling me I had a right to do. I was exercising my Faculty of Intermediary Arrest in a Station of Bifurcation.

REALLY, MY DEAR . . .*

CHARACTERS: A Poet, A Poem, Four Children, Five Women, known merely as A, B, C, D, E.

Toward the footlights the room is pleasingly furnished as a conventional home, with chairs, rugs, bookcases, a table, and a door L. But about halfway up the stage, a white line is plainly marked across the floor. Beyond this line the stage is bare and everything seems to soften and fade off into vacancy. The back of the stage gives a strange effect of being open into infinite space. A blue backdrop and some delicacy of lighting give the illusion that the whole back wall has been removed, and the room merges imperceptibly into a suffusion of distance in which are undulations and ripples of enchanting blue and green and opal. This shimmering background must give a feeling of pure ether, endless in perspective and alive with transcendent suggestion.

A little way above the dividing line the POET *sits at a small, plain table, three-quarters averted from the audience. He has sheets of paper in front of him and is staring vacantly at the blue depths of his imagination. At the back, toward the azure emptiness, four children dressed in bright little flimsy draperies are dancing softly and*

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slowly, in circles and to and fro. The pattern of their measure is light, fanciful, thoughtful, and serene.
A *comes in L., straightens furniture, goes up to the white line and, taking care not to touch it, looks vaguely toward the back as though unable to see anything beyond the line. She calls.*

A: John?

[*At the sound of her voice the children instantly stop dancing, put black cloaks over their gauze kirtles, and come down to their side of the line, where they stand warily at attention, facing her but apparently not seeing her.*]

A: John, are you there?

POET *(without changing his attitude)*: Yes.

A: Is everything all right, dear?

POET: I guess so.

A: May I come in a moment?

[*He does not reply, but the four children shift their positions, standing two and two to form a passage. She steps gingerly over the line, between the solemn children, who follow her as she goes to him. She speaks tenderly.*]

John, is she coming this afternoon?

POET: I don't know. How can I tell?

A: Well, I mean, do you feel as if she *might* come?

POET: Yes, I think so.

[*The children, hearing this, look at each other with faces of pleasure.*]

A: Oh John, I *do* hope she'll be everything you need.

[*But as he remains moodily fixed on vacancy she pauses, hesitates a moment, and then returns toward the line. She holds out her hands toward the children as if to cajole them, but they are wary, and when she makes a sudden move to catch one of them the child evades her and skips lightly away. She catches only one of the black cloaks. She looks at it, throws it down sadly, and steps over the line. She sits, takes up a book, and reads.*

The children begin marching in file, very softly, round and round the POET'S *table, as though on guard. Then they gather by him, one sitting on the table, one leaning over his shoulder, all clustering close while he still keeps the same attitude.*

A bell rings. A *goes to the door, L., and greets four ladies who enter, cheerfully voluble. They carry packages.*]

A: Why, how do you do! What a surprise!

B: I hope we're not interrupting.

C: We simply had to come.

A: I'm glad to see you.

D: My dear, what a cunning home!

E: We hadn't seen you since the great event.

B: I hope you weren't busy.

A: Not a bit. I was just reading some of John's poetry.

C: I've always been so crazy about his wonderful poetry.

D: I've always wanted to know what it's like to live with a genius.

E: Now you must show us everything.

B: It's wonderful of you to let us come in like this.

C: Where does he work?

A [*Steering them away from the white line*]: Careful,

don't—— Here, come and sit down. [*She gets them safely seated, close to the footlights.*]

B: We've brought you some wedding presents.

C: All *useful* things. I think that's so much more sensible.

A: Oh, how nice!—But perhaps it isn't fair for me to take them. You see, we haven't been married.

D: Not been married!

E: My dear!

A: I don't think so. As a matter of fact, I'm really not certain. We've been so happy, I don't remember.

E: You must be mistaken, I read a note in the *Alumnæ Bulletin* about your having been married—

A: Well, perhaps we were. One gets confused about these things. We've been cohabiting anyway.

B: Really, my dear—

E: It's not the same thing at all. At least, not for the *Alumnæ Bulletin.*

C *(to* D*)*: It seems impossible. Everything here looks so nice, so normal.

D *(to* C*)*: D'you think we'd better stay?

B: And we took so much trouble picking out the wedding presents!

A: Can't you pretend they're cohabitation presents?

C: People don't give cohabitation presents.

E: Cohabitation is its own reward.

D: I think she'd better have them anyway. It looks better.

B: Certainly.

C: If the *Alumnæ Bulletin* said she was married, no one will ever believe the contrary.

E: Better not give them a chance. Alumnæ are always eager to believe the contrary.

A: Then perhaps it's worth believing.

B: Don't be perverse, darling. [*Unwrapping parcel.*] Even if you haven't earned them, we've brought you some very choice things. [*She exhibits an alarm clock.*]

A: Oh, lovely! Just what we needed. John and I are *so* drowsy in the mornings, it seems almost impossible to wake up.

D *(to* C*)*: She mustn't say such things.

C *(to* D*)*: Well, it certainly isn't fair to say them to older women. [*She turns to* A, *unwraps and proudly displays a telephone instrument of the Continental type.*] There! I do hope you haven't got one already. It's one of the French ones.

A: Adorable! Like they always have on the stage.

C: They're very handy.

A: You can keep on smoking while you talk. Oh, I love it! They make everything sound so Belasco. The commonest appointment sounds like an assignation.

D [*giving a toy icebox, which she opens to show a cube of imitation ice, and miniature representations of meats, vegetables, etc.*]: Even if you aren't married, my precious, you have to eat.

E [*whose gift is a toy baby carriage*]: And even little bastards have to be wheeled about.

A: Darlings! You've thought of everything.

B: One's friends always do.

A: We'll arrange these right away. [*She puts the gifts along the dividing line.*] This is the bedroom [*puts alarm clock toward R. side of stage*], this is the living room [*puts telephone at centre*], the kitchen [*puts ice-box at L.*], and—well, we haven't any nursery, it had better go here for the time being. [*Puts baby carriage beside the alarm clock.*]

C: If you have enough telephones and iceboxes and things around, it's as good as being married. It amounts to the same thing.

[*The children round the* POET *have shown signs of anxiety during the latter part of this conversation. They come down toward the line and look peeringly across it as though intuitively aware that something is happening which they cannot quite perceive or understand. But they do not yet see the visitors, nor the visitors them.*]

D: You said you were reading his poetry.

E: What is it, something new?

B: Oh, do read it aloud to us.

C: Poetry is so *intimate,* seems to take you so close to a person's thoughts.

A: It's the new book, hasn't been published yet. There's one thing here I'd love to read you.

D: Oh, do!

B: That would be such a privilege.

[A *picks up the book and opens it as if to read aloud from it, the others settle themselves to listen.* A's *lips move as if she is reading to them, but she utters no*

sound. And after a moment the others rise in a quiet, almost furtive way and begin snooping about. A *lays down the book to watch them. Without wishing to drive the idea in too hard, it is suggested that what follows is the drama that transpires inside their minds while* A *is reading aloud to them.*]

C [*rather softly, like a conspirator*]: Now we want to know all about everything.

D [*walks along by the white line*]: This is the back wall?

A: That's not a wall, that's the equator. You see, on this side is *my* mind, and over there is John's.

E: How very extraordinary.

B [*incredulous*]: That is your husb— that's his mind over there?

A: Yes. Please be careful, don't interrupt him.

C [*they are peering across the line, as though looking into a mist*]: It looks perfectly blank.

B: Husbands' minds always—— I keep forgetting he's *not* a husband.

E: And this is yours? A mind of your own?

A: Of course.

D: Really, my dear, it's most irregular. [*To* C] For goodness' sake don't let this get into the *Bulletin*.

A: But haven't *you* got one?

D: Certainly not. Not in my own home at any rate. Things got so crowded, I had to fit it up as a nursery.

C [*still looking intently across the line*]: I can begin

to see—— Oh, what lovely creatures! Gracious, have you got children already?

A: Oh, no, those are his Thoughts.

B: What darlings! Oh, I *must* look at them.

[*She steps across the line. The children run back hastily to the* POET *as if to shield him. He looks about vaguely, then concentrates again on his papers while they stand defensively round him.*]

A: They're rather shy, I'm afraid.—Oh, *please* don't; it's dangerous to go looking into other people's minds.

[*But in spite of her protest* C *and* D *have also crossed the line.*]

E [*looking around the downstage area*]: Haven't *you* any Thoughts?

A: Not real ones. At least John says not. I've got lots of little emotions and instincts and intuitions, but they're awfully well trained. They're invisible.

E: Much safer, I'm sure.

[*She also crosses the line.* A, *with a gesture of defeat, follows her.*]

A: John, darling, I'm so sorry,—they would come in.

[*The children put on their black cloaks again and come forward demurely, curtsying politely in unison.*]

CHILDREN [*one after another, to* B, C, D, *and* E, *with mechanical politeness*]:

How do you do?
How do you do?
How do you do?
How do you do?

B: Aren't they sweet!

C: Such nice manners!

D: My dear, how well you've trained them!

E [*reaching toward one of the children*]: Sweetheart, won't you come and make friends?

1ST CHILD [*drawing away with dignity*]: I'm not interested.

B: Cunning!

2D CHILD: What did you come for? We were quite happy.

C: We brought you some toys, darling.

3D CHILD: We don't want any toys. We have our own.

D: The precious! So independent!—But don't you get lonely?

4TH CHILD: We dance.

[*The children perform a brief little sort of folk dance, making daintily mocking gestures toward the visitors.*]

E [*to* A, *who looks very unhappy*]: What a privilege to come right inside like this. It *is* interesting.

B: It's queer, isn't it. Funny, it doesn't seem furnished.

C: I should think you'd put down some rugs and have some chairs or pictures or bric-à-brac.

A: Oh don't you see, it's *his* mind.

D: But my gracious, you *live* in it, don't you?

A: Not all the time.

E: Goodness, you certainly ought to improve it, fix it up a little.

[*The visitors walk about inquisitively, the children keeping warily out of reach and between them and the* POET. *Each visitor is attended by one child.* A *stands*

and watches them, while the POET *stirs and looks round uneasily from his table.*]

B: It's so different from what I imagined.

E [*in a voice of horror*]: Really, my dear, the place is positively dirty. It needs a thorough housecleaning.

C: Oh, I think it's pitiful. Don't you see, they're so poor they can't *afford* to furnish it properly.

D: We must do something to help.

E: Make it look homelike and—oh!

B: What?

E: It's all open at the back!

[*They look off horrified toward the blue vacancy at the rear.*]

C: How dreadful.

D: Heavens, that's awfully dangerous.

C [*to* A]: Darling, your little home is just dear, but do you think it's *wise* to have everything *open* like that?

E: Isn't it terribly draughty?

B: Now you mustn't mind our making suggestions. You see, we've had more experience.

D [*who has been looking off at the rear*]: And so high up, not even a railing, why, it's a perfect abyss.

C: You might fall out any moment.

E: Think of a man keeping his mind open like that. It's outrageous.

B: And look—those—those figures out there—[*She points toward the back where a glimpse is had of white forms moving in the blue mist.*]

C: Gracious. Is *that* the sort of thing he thinks about?

D: But the things poets write—are they real, or just

fantasy? I mean—the kind of things—oh, you know—they don't really happen, do they?

E: Oh, how beastly you are. You don't understand.

[*During these remarks the children have shrunk from the visitors in dismay. They have gone over toward the R. at the rear, where they stand close together as though concealing something.* A *is beside the* POET, *who now rises to his feet and stands with an air of expectancy. He is only half aware of her, but puts his hand gently on her shoulder.*]

B [*looking toward* A]: Poor dear, I'm so sorry for her.

C: Never mind, we're going to help.

D: We'll make ourselves a kind of committee.

E: I adore committees.

B: What are those—those Thoughts doing over there?

C: They look very guilty.

D: I think they're trying to hide something.

[*They go over to the group of children.*]

E: They are! Now, Thoughts, what mischief are you up to?

[*The children hastily drop their black cloaks over something behind them, and run back to the* POET.]

A: Oh, don't! Don't interfere!

B: Nonsense, darling, we're here to be helpful.

[*She picks up the black cloaks, and they all utter a cry of amazement.*]

C: Oh!

D: Good heavens!

E: Mercy!

[*They bend over and raise the limp form of a young*

girl who has been lying there, concealed by a coverlet of some sort, in the blue shadows. She is apparently lifeless and is clad only in a chemise.]

B: Gracious. Is she asleep or drunk or what?

A: Don't, don't. You'll hurt her.

C: But what's the matter with her?

D: She's ill, she needs treatment.

E: She's got scarcely any clothes on, the huzzy.

B: Lying around in underclothes, right inside a man's mind. Disgraceful!

C: Really, my dear. You allow this sort of thing?

A: Don't be silly. She hasn't been finished yet.

D: Hasn't been finished?

A: She's only half written. A rough draft.

B: She looks it. Wearing only one stanza.

A [*comes over to them*]: Poor dear! Isn't she lovely? He was crazy about her, but I think he's discarded her. He said her cæsura was all wrong.

E: Really, my dear——

A [*letting the lifeless form sink gently back on the floor and looking at it tenderly*]: I thought her lines were lovely but he said her assonance was too thin. [*Covers the figure.*] He may come back to her some day.

B [*to the others*]: This is worse than I thought possible.

C: She seems absolutely blind to the shame of it!

D: It's outrageous—inviting us in here and then showing us a thing like that!

E: If a man behaves that way in his own mind, what would he do in other people's?

B: There's only one thing to do——

C [*to* A]: Forgive me for speaking frankly. You'll simply have to occupy his mind with other things.

D: So he won't have time to go philandering with—well, what you call rough drafts.

A [*troubled*]: You really think so?

E: If an unwritten poem looks like that, think of an unwritten novel!

B: Yes, my dear, consider your responsibility.

C: Better he shouldn't think at all than think things of that sort.

A [*influenced by their certainty*]: Oh, it's hard to know. We were so happy.

D: Remember, dear, never permit anything you'd be sorry to see mentioned in the *Alumnæ Bulletin.*

E: These will help.

[*The visitors hastily pick up the gifts they have brought and carry them over toward the* POET'S *table.*]

Surround him with these. [*She puts down the baby carriage near the table.*]

B [*placing the alarm clock on the table*]: Don't forget to set the alarm.

[*It goes off with a jangle.*]

C [*bringing the telephone*]: This is useful too. You've no idea what a help it can be. It prevents too much thinking.

D [*putting the icebox by the table*]: Lots of dangerous sonnets have been averted by a visit to the icebox.

E: Now there must be some way of fixing that emptiness at the back. Have you got any screens we could put——

[*But at this moment there is a faint waft of music heard from behind, and the children run forward in an ecstasy of delight and begin dancing gaily. The* POET, *with a gesture of triumph, stands alert, his face toward the back of the stage.*]

A [*joyfully*]: She's coming! She's coming!

[*The children, frisking in a wild abandon of glee and expectancy, push* A *and the visitors down toward the line, and carry the alarm clock, telephone, baby carriage, and icebox over to one side of the stage.*]

B: What's happening?

A: She's coming. The new poem he's been working on.

[*The children run toward the back with arms outstretched in greeting. In the blue mistiness appears the graceful figure of a young woman dressed in a light, shimmery evening gown. The children run to her. She takes their hands and dances with them, a little symbolic dance, in which she seems now to run away while they pursue, and now to turn and draw them gladly to her. Finally she stoops and gathers them all into her arms.*]

1ST CHILD: You are beautiful.

2D CHILD: We hoped you'd come.

3D CHILD: We've been very patient.

4TH CHILD: He'll be so proud of you.

THE POEM: You mean, I'll be so proud of him. He invented me.

1ST CHILD: Hurry, darling. He's waited so long.

[*Laughing and looking adoringly at her, they take her hands and lead her to the* POET, *who has been watching with grave happiness. She stands before him: a little wistful, a little shy, yet wholly radiant. He looks at her critically and tenderly, measuring her with his eye; touches her dress in two or three places as if assuring himself of its fit and fabric; pats her shoulder; twitches her skirt to adjust its hang. Then he opens his arms and she comes home to his embrace. The children dance merrily round them as they stand locked together. The* POET *sits down and takes her on his lap and they whisper passionately together.*

The visitors, standing close to the line, shake their heads with a scandalized air and look covertly at A, *who is watching tenderly.*]

A: She's lovely, lovely! Oh, I'm so glad.

E: At any rate she's properly dressed.

A: He may want to change one or two of her adjectives.

B: Well, I hope he'll wait till we've gone.

A: Silly, he hasn't the faintest idea you're here.

[*One of the children runs to the side of the stage and fetches a rich, glowing cloak of flame colour, which the* POET *throws over the* POEM. *She poses in it before him; he puts his arm protectively about her and leads her off toward the back where they stand together in a haze of colours.*]

C: I suppose that means she's ready for publication.

D: I never saw anything so brazen.

E: Really, my dear. You actually allow this sort of behaviour?

A: Allow it? I glory in it. What else am I here for, but to help him with his dreams?

[*She steps across the line, and the others follow her. As they come downstage, below the line, a curtain descends quietly behind them, exactly along the white line, cutting off the* POET'S *mind from the view of the audience. This curtain is painted with an amusingly formal and unreal representation of an interior, showing bookcases, furniture, windows, etc. There is an opening cut in it to serve as a doorway.*

If this device proves too laborious for the amateur producer, it will be sufficient merely to turn off all the lights at the back of the stage at the moment when the ladies cross the line and come back to A's *portion of the stage.*

They seat themselves exactly as they were before, when A *began to read to them.* A *again takes the book, looks at it an instant as though just finishing her reading aloud, and lays it down.*]

B: That was wonderful, darling.

C: Marvellous. I've always been crazy about poetry.

D: A real inspiration.

E: I'm only sorry not to have seen the Poet himself.

B: But we've had this little look into his mind.

C: Isn't it extraordinary how they can invent all those things.

D: You really ought to give public readings. You made that seem so *real.*

E: It's been sweet to see you and find you so happy.

B: And now you're settled you *will* send your address to the *Bulletin?*

C: So some of the others can come to see you——

D: Well, dear, we must run along.

E: I'm one of those very rare women who really *do* go when they say they're going.

[*The* POET *appears at the opening in the curtain. Behind him the children are seen mischievously peeping out, but they do not come through.*]

POET: May I come in?

A: Oh, John, I'm so glad. They were just going.

POET [*To each of the visitors in turn, politely*]: How do you do?

B: I hope we haven't interrupted your work.

C: I've always been so crazy about your books.

D: A real inspiration.

E: We've just been reading something of yours. It made me feel as though I really knew some of your innermost thoughts.

[*The children giggle shamelessly in the opening.*]

1ST CHILD: Tell them to beat it.

2D CHILD: We want to go on with the game.

B: Are you engaged on anything very special?

POET: Oh, no—there's a poem on the way, but——

C: Do you like it?

POET: I do, rather, but it's not finished yet. There are always such a lot of unfinished things lying about.

D [*primly*]: Dear me.

E: We really must go.

[*They utter a little babble of good-byes, to which* A *and the* POET *reply only perfunctorily. The children in the doorway wave good-bye derisively. The visitors, having bustled toward the exit, L., pause a moment, realizing that their hosts are no longer paying any attention to them.*

POET [*to* A]: She did come. She's wonderful. Come and see her.

[*And as they are about to go through the opening in the curtain, he adds:*] Of course, every woman is an unfinished poem.

[*They go off into his mind. The little group of visitors look at each other. They hurry off, L., saying:*]

B: Well of all the queer——

C: Perfectly outrageous——

D: The *Alumnæ Bulletin*——

E: Really, my dear——

CURTAIN

THE CENTURY

IN NEW YORK we think of the Twentieth Century Limited as just a train, but in Chicago she is an institution. The Century, as she is affectionately and familiarly called out there, makes her departure from the La Salle Street station with something of the circumstance of a crack liner leaving her pier. Visitors stand along the platform to see her off. Telephone booths, right beside her shining brass observation balcony, are busy until the last moment. There are even telephones in the observation car, disconnected at the final tick. That brass-railed platform at the end of the train seems, in those parting instants, as romantic as a Shakespearean set. The morale of the whole scene is magnificent. Porters have an air, and are double-tipped for it. The railroad conductor and the Pullman conductor, both stout, elderly, ruddy nabobs, confer like captain and staff captain on the bridge of *Mauretania.* She pulls out on the tick, and leaps at once into her long smooth stride. Behind you see the second section following, the big locomotive fluttering two green flags. I don't know how passengers, sitting softly in observation or club car, can settle down so promptly to the *Illustrated London News* or *Liberty.* It is all far too exciting.

And, just as in a big liner sailing from New York,

as soon as you are off lunch is served. Going along the corridors you are thrilled by the intimate air of all those little compartments. Yourself, a mere occupant of a lower in the usual type of sleeper, feel a little humbled by those apartment-house cars that are all private cabins. You meet the train stenographer, he asks for your name "for the Train Register." "Oh," he says, "there's a gentleman looking for you, Mr. Soandso, a friend of Mr. Blank." (Mr. Blank has been your host in Chicago.) "What space have you got?" *Space,* I have learned, is the technical term for your location on a swell train. He tells me what Mr. Soandso's space is, so I can look him up. I am abashed to admit that I didn't: it was discourteous, but this was my first voyage in the Century and I wanted to brood.

Her morale, I repeat, is magnificent. In the diner the steward gives you a cheerful and apparently recognitory grin. "It's a long time since we had the pleasure of having *you* with us," he says, and of course I am subtly flattered to be thought an alumnus. The officers of this champion train are on generous terms with regular patrons. My friend Mr. Blank, who is an epicure, was once brought a parcel of codfish tongues by the conductor. There are fresh flowers on each table: a rose, two carnations, and a daffodil. The Century celebrates her twenty-fifth anniversary this spring. I suppose when she makes her quarter-century run, on June 15, there will be big doings. All sorts of things have happened on the roads since 1902, and will happen by 1952; yet, even in these spacious days of Tin Elizabeth the locomotive

still gives us the greatest thrill. I hear much of King Ganaway, the Chicago photographer who has done marvellous pictures of engines. I hope he'll do the Century as she pulls out of La Salle Street on the morning of June 15th.

We make our first stop at Elkhart. It's fine to see a squad of oilers and coal-passers leap at the engine almost before she has come to a stop and begin hostlering her. You stroll up and down the platform for a brief inhale of windy March, try to savour the feeling of Indiana, the green little park, the Civil War statue. You admire the two rotund conductors, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, still conferring. Then we're off again. The Second Section pulls in just as we leave. Do they keep it up like that, nip and tuck, all night?

The sweet brown fields of Indiana recede behind us. Chew Mail Pouch, Chew Bag Pipes; red cows, red pigs, red barns. And, if you have been spending a few days with a typical Chicago host, you suddenly find yourself strangely and peaceably weary. I guess there's truth in what the railroad claims about the water-level route: certainly the running is amazingly smooth. Going back to your seat in the car *French Lake* you find a fat white pillow put there by a fat black porter. You oblique yourself into it. Your mind goes back to the wonders of that amazing city. An apartment high over the lake, a night of gale and sleet, grilled casement windows looking onto the foam of perilous lakes forlorn. The roar of that fresh water surf sounds even above the roar of the fire in the great chimney throat. Like

all genuine Chicagoans my host believes in going nature one better. His logs are treated with chemicals, the flames are blue and silver and platinum colour. In that gale and draught the fire burns through suddenly. You leave the room for a little while—when you come back it is all burned out; no softly glowing log to linger redly. In the elevator shafts of lake front apartments the gale screams a fierce æolian cry. I wish Shakespeare had known Chicago. And softly, with a little terror even, pondering these things, you fall asleep.

You wake up just entering Toledo. Again a chance for a swig of air. You are thrilled by strange names on cars and engines—*Nickel Plate Road, Hocking Valley, Père Marquette.* You buy a Toledo paper. An ad amused me—*Girls, carry a spare.* Stocking, they mean. It appears that life in Toledo is hard on hosiery, for you are urged to buy stockings "Three to the pair." Then, if a run starts (says the ad) you take your spare from your purse and refill.—Just as I was losing myself in Ronald Fraser's *Flower Phantoms* (what an enchanting book!) I noticed a pleasant town. The porter came by: what is this place, I asked him. "This is Elyria," he said. That indeed had a Shakespearean sound. "What country, friends, is this?" "This is Illyria, lady."

By dusk the train has settled down to so tranquil and domestic a routine that you have all the settled feeling of an ocean voyage. From the little compartments comes the sound of card-playing, bursts of cheerful mirth. Yet the Centurions are not too folksy, as on lesser trains. You are not approached, as I was on another limited once, to

know if I'd make a fourth at bridge. I said I didn't play bridge. Well, how about poker said the other. I said I didn't play poker. "Do you play anything at all?" was his final attempt. Whatever it might have been I fear I'd have lost.

When you've had a light dinner, and read G. K. Chesterton in the *Illustrated London News,* and remembered to put your watch an hour ahead, you'll find your berth made up. You fall asleep just as you come into Erie.

What happens between Erie and Albany I have no notion. Usually I don't sleep much on trains, but I thank the Century for some eight hours vanished forever from my life—hours of complete nothing, a capsule of eternity. You wake, being on the starboard side, to see a half moon riding in pale light over a faint rosy epilogue of dawn. You smoke a pipe and pensively overhaul your belongings. Somehow you've lost your collar button, but (like the girls of Toledo) you had a spare with you. Your pride over this makes you quite pleased with yourself. You nap for another hour or so, and then orange juice and scrambled eggs.

I was sorry to see the last of our relay of locomotives leave us at Harmon. It would have been nice for her, I thought, to have had the honour of roaring us proudly to the very end. And I wouldn't have been myself, I reflected ruefully, if I hadn't immediately gone on to find a symbol in the matter. For it is just so with man throughout his life—he's frequently changing engines. For a while, Fun is his motive power; then Earning, or

Ambition, or Love, or Family, all powerful moguls, keep him all steamed up. Perhaps it is the quiet electric engine, Peace, that brings him at last into his Grand Central Station.

IN GENEVA

I

YOU will have to be patient with me while I try to tell you about Geneva. Already it has faded into a sunny haze, through which I see a pale blue shimmer of the lake, white swans tacking against the lucid pour of the stream, little men in dark coats with brief-cases full of agenda papers. Those European brief-cases, of course, that fold over on themselves like large pocket-books, and have no handle. They contain papers so important, one supposes, that they must not be carried by a handle but hugged warmly against the ribs.

No one had ever told me—but then I find that hardly any one ever does tell me anything—about the Lake of Geneva. How it lies so still and reflective in its opal crater. Such beautiful dead water, with the soft sodden smell that fresh water always has to those of us who live by tidal salt. And then, under the bridges of Geneva you see that that water is dangerously alive. Why did no one ever tell me how it goes racing down into the Rhone, creaming and crisping against the piers of the bridges, swimming beneath your feet with such speed that you feel a little giddy and touch the hand-rail of the bridge for steadiness. So you realize that under all that stillness

of untroubled blue there was this dreaming purpose, this constant anxiety for escape. Then you look differently at that level shimmer, where the punctual little steamers churn white furrows and sailboats hover like troops of butterflies. All that weight and colour of pictured liquid has intentions of its own, which have nothing to do with the cheerful tourists. Like all the still volume of thought in the mind, it moves in secret stream toward the fierce endless Now. What does Rousseau, sitting in effigy on his flat-iron islet, think of the philosophical analogies? The swift water divides about him with a hiss; the sharp prow of his island is like the nose of a destroyer racing in calm sea. Must philosophers always sit so, aghast in a downward rush of Time? The mind, prompt to invert phenomena for its own comfort, hastens to believe the water standing still, the island and the pretty trinket town steering busily upstream.

There was a queer feeling of having arrived in Geneva backwards, for at Ambérieu the train reversed itself and put on an engine at the other end. All the way up that gorgeous defile towards Culoz I had a queer sensation that we were going the wrong way. To the Long Islander, who has little enough dealing with great hills, that steep approach to Switzerland is good exercise for the nape. You crouch in the corridor of the car, cricking upward to see the sloping strata of gray and yellow cliff that overhang the train. Fine peaky jags of stone go spiring into the strong sunset light. You dare not praise these hills too much, lest the Alps themselves, when you see them, have no residue of surprise. But it seems a pity to

be faring in a train, instead of on a bicycle along that magic road. In the dusk, in the aperitive hour, you reach Geneva at last. You are ready by now for almost any imaginable thrill. You would not be surprised if your bedroom window looked right off upon the shining sierras of Mont Blanc.

But Mont Blanc, as you soon learn, veils himself. You may pass a whole week in Geneva and never see him. And it was nothing picturesque nor historic that first caught my eye. It was a certain brand of tobacco, that comes in a blue tin, which I have sought in vain elsewhere on the Continent. The number and luxury of the tobacconists was my first thrill, and always that admirable but costly blue tin in the window. Then, rambling about in the evening freshness, you hear the orchestra playing on the terrace of the Café du Nord. You begin to feel the intense artificiality of this enchanting town.

I don't mean artificial in any derogating sense. The word that kept coming into my mind was *civilized*. Geneva is certainly the most sedulously trimmed, regulated, and finished city I have ever seen. It is so civil and comely, you forget the rough hills you crept under to reach it; you forget the incredible back-drop of the Alps behind it. All those neatly clipped parasol-shaped plane trees seem as though they should grow in green tubs. The town is as pretty, as neat, as well-wound as the little watches that tick in its handsome shop windows. Whatever resources, consolations, comforts, distractions, civilization has to offer (and they are many) are available there. The routine of the town's life seems to go on by

silent wizardry. The streets are cleaned until they shine, but one does not see it being done. The tables are ready for lunch at the appointed hour. The latest books in three languages are in the bookshops punctually on publication day.

It is, to me, the most civilized town I have ever seen; I could not endure it for very long, for it is too perfect. Everything for instance that is, in American cities, wild, haphazard, and terrifying, has been settled long ago in Geneva. "Geneva, City of Refuge," says an inscription on an old, old tower, and indeed one has a sense of safe asylum, of having reached a stronghold of order where problems of traffic, transportation, drainage, education, piety, and everything else are well in hand. Like all good-natured and methodical people who seem to have no problems of their own, Geneva finds those of others unloaded upon her. But even international indignations seem to lose something of their sting in that gay and week-end atmosphere. Perhaps one reason why it seemed to me that Geneva was having a good time was that almost everyone there (except me) was having his expenses paid by someone else. The number of delegates, secretaries, journalists, propagandists, observers, touring commissions, functionaries of international peace, is almost incredible. I, representing no one, there merely as unprejudicated spectator, responsible to no one but my own curiosity, paid my share (even more than my share) of the drinks and listened attentively.

It will be difficult, it will be very difficult, not to give you some sort of false impression of Geneva. For there

are comic phases that must be mentioned. But before approaching them it is necessary to say that one feels there a very real, a very thrilling sense of internationality. Where, on every hand, one sees the flags and faces of so many different peoples, one cannot remain rigidly convinced of the perfect rightness of any single clan. The United States, though not yet a member of the League, has made its great contribution. The one most important place I visited in Geneva was the Sporting Bar, an American grog-shop, which is the favourite rendezvous of the young diplomats, journalists, and second-string envoys of all nations. They and their ladies convene in this admirable place before and after all important meetings, and in a jabber of various lingoes fleet the time carelessly. There, more than in any discourse in the Salle de Réformation, you will hear what Norway, Uruguay, Germany, or the Serbs-Croats-Slovenes really think about the speech just made by Briand or Chamberlain. There you will seal surprising friendships in the course of the cocktail hour, and will encounter that lively Swiss aperitive the Bitter-Diableret. There you will hear discussed such hilarious matters as the painful schism that divided a party of American newspaper editors touring the Continent at the expense of the Carnegie Foundation. Some of the party thought one way about certain things, and some thought another. When one editor, at an official dinner in Munich, desiring to pay compliment to their hosts, delivered an impassioned eulogy on Beer, the social solidarity of the troupe was permanently fractured. There you will hear anecdote of the inside workings of the Secretariat,

which will fortify your general theory of the human scheme. One thinks more gaily of the League when one knows it to be subject to the same ecumenical laws of comedy that operate alike upon Senators, Prime Ministers, and Bishops. There was the famous day when one of the stenographers of the Secretariat suffered a *crise de nerfs* and locked herself in the bathroom to brood. Her consœurs rattled and banged on the door, and besought her to come out, but in vain. At last they grew really worried, but one of them had the inspiration to cry "Lizzie, Lizzie! you're holding up the League!" which appeal to her sense of world responsibility was successful. The phrase has become classic in Geneva.

II

I HAD never had any definite notion of what the League might look like, so my very first morning in Geneva I set off, with the most agreeable anticipation, to see if I could find it. I felt rather proud of not having tried, in any way, to get any sort of privileged or functioneering entrée. My mind was as open, as unblemished, as serene, as that bright day itself. It is true that I discovered in myself a pleasant sort of family or paternal sentiment in regard to the whole affair. Having been a hard-working editorialist at the time of the League's birth, I had written innumerable paragraphs in its favour; I felt that in my own small way I had contributed to its credit. The journalist mind (never yet adequately explored by psychology) is like that: in a very consoling and innocent

egotism it likes to imagine itself an authority upon any topic it has ever editorially discussed. There were middle-Western newspaper editors in Geneva, wearied by a long expense-paid junket in pursuit of doctrine, who had long ago denounced the League as a chimera living at the foot of a rainbow. These editors felt it a personal grievance to find the League, undaunted by mixed metaphor, going busily about its affairs. One, bitterly surveying the throng at the Assembly, said, "These people remind me of the secretaries of commercial clubs in South Dakota." It is idle to say that editorials do not influence opinion. They often strongly influence the opinion of the people who write them, and I fear that an editor examines phenomena chiefly with an eye to corroborate what he has already said in print.

Therefore, I had honourably made whatever effort may be necessary to make one's mind a blank. Other than the natural exultation of a philosopher in discovering so ecumenical a microcosm under his eye, other than the ordinary human enjoyment of a prodigiously clement weather, I could trace in myself no outlines of fixed idea. I did not even make inquiry from any of the burly Vaudois peasantry who serve as Genevese gendarmes and look like figures out of *Punch and Judy*. The map of the town marked the Palace of the League of Nations; thither, after buying a walking-stick for forty cents, I made my way. The stick was my social gesture in honour of the fact that an old friend, whom I expected to meet presently, was on the permanent staff of the Secretariat. I felt that it was expected of me, and I used it stoutly

so that when I should see my friend it would not look too *arriviste.*

The shining boulevard along the lake is rather like a toy Chicago, though Bill Thompson would be shent, if he were mayor of Geneva, by so many evidences of alien propaganda. My first failure as an internationalist, I realized, was my inability to identify many of the innumerable flags along that street of handsome hotels and apartments. But one very international symbol (also carrying a cane) was easily recognizable—a little squad of Charlie Chaplin dolls, somersaulting on the pavement for a peddling vendor. On the benches, among the bright geranium beds and trim *pelouses* of the park, the pretty girls of Geneva were reading books. A brisk career of well-groomed cars kept flowing along the street, cars which I vaguely supposed to be hastening on important international errands, but the gardened shore-line was pellucid indolence. The lake wearied the eyes with its brilliant level. Even the young women (and Geneva, I insist, has a chic of its own) did not seem wholly absorbed in literature. I had a feeling that they were simply marking time until more amusing affairs would begin; I wondered whether Lake Leman might not be well named. These idle comments I join with you in reproaching; but I repeat that my mind was blank and candid; I was simply trying to get the feel of the place. Even in the Gardens of Gethsemane sweethearts may have sat one evening in the dark, heard strange footsteps and voices, seen torchlight flicker on the olive trees; shrunk closer

together and thought little of it. He who does not admit such chances is no fit historian.

It did begin to strike me, however, as I approached the Palace, so-called, that all was singularly placid. Even with the highest optimism I had not imagined it possible that an international meeting could be so calmly conducted. The Villa Beau Regard, which adjoins the Palace, seemed to me the ideal place for a cosmopolitan-minded philosopher to settle down and write. Its charming garden, with big tasselled pine trees and deck-chairs standing on the lawn, lay open to the sunny forenoon. With the experienced eye of the householder I conned it through the railings; wondered whether it was a private home or used as some bureau headquarters; estimated its bedrooms and plumbing; imagined how agreeable some modern Voltaire or Rousseau would find it to pace those shrubberies and meditate his current chapter to the faint echo of the League's typewriters clicking from next door. If I were the League's publicity department I should set apart the Villa Beau Regard as a hostel for writers of liberal temper who might be invited to live there for a year at a time. The Bertrand Russells, the Romain Rollands, the H. G. Wellses, the John Erskines, might be advoked as creative guests. Thither could be brought the brooding Swede, the agile Japanee, the fantastic Hungarian, the courteous Brazilian, the groping and humorous Yank. At the heart of the cyclone, they tell us, is an area of quiet. The Villa Beau Regard, adjacent to the world's most controversial collection of filing cases, has an air of untroubled calm. I wish I knew who lives there.

The Palace itself has the appearance of, and I daresay is, a bulky and flimsy old hotel—very much the Adirondack sanitarium of the McKinley period of architecture. On the low wall beneath the terraced gardens is a tablet, put there by the city of Geneva, to Woodrow Wilson, "Fondateur de la Société des Nations." I should not have been surprised to see statesmen walking the garden paths, arguing delicate points of concession, and an admiring throng lining the precinct; but the enclosure was empty except for a gardener tidying the gravel.

The rear of the building, away from the lake, was evidently the business approach. Here, in the rue des Pâquis (Pasture Street) a few cars were parked, a Swiss policeman stood at the gate, young women of intensely secretarial aspect (including, I dare say, the Lizzie of the anecdote) came in and out. A gentle ticking of typewriters, but not at all urgent, drifted upon the soft air. A car rolled up and I waited anxiously, half expecting M. Briand or Sir Austen Chamberlain. Again it was a lady secretary, carrying a brief case. I began to think to myself that the League had very much the flavour of a convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs. All these ladies wore, in a very concentrated and attractive quality, that special radiance of pleasure that the sex shows in any form of parliamentary doings.

Of course by this time I had begun to suspect, what I later learned to be so, that the Assembly of the League does not meet at the Palace at all, but at the Salle de la Réformation in quite a different part of the city. Of the Assembly in session I may say something presently. But I

shall never be sorry to have had my first glimpse of the League in that informal way, when it did not suspect that anyone was looking at it. Lizzie and her colleagues were there on Pasture Street keeping up the files, while all the heads of departments were at the Conference. That, as much as anything else, showed me that the League is not a super-state, nor a chimera, nor even a rainbow, but a very businesslike organism. It is not entirely in the rostrum that the League is important, though as a sounding board it is valuable enough. The little advertised and conscientious work that goes into its investigations of such matters as the Settlement of Armenian Refugees, Cholera in Japan, Opium in Persia, memoranda on Coal, on Dumping, on the Artificial Silk Industry, or statistics of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition—these are the things that I think are worth meditation. It is true that an institution like the League sets up a standard to which professional joiners and pew openers are only too eager to repair. My acid colleague who compared some of the blue-bottles at the Assembly to the secretaries of commercial clubs was savage in intention, but I use his analogy to my own advantage. For I do not find the League a sentimental affair, but a cool, hard-headed, and Strictly Business proposition.

III

THE hall is not large. It is about the size of a college auditorium, and panelled in a plain brown wood that gives it a sort of Lutheran feeling. The unofficial spectators, who have been admitted by little pink cards, are

herded into a small section at the back of the ground floor, or in the rear end of the gallery. They are intensely serious, and a little indignant because they are not allowed to climb over into the press galleries, along the sides, which are only half filled. But the ushers are fierce. At the least sign of life on the part of the visitors they hiss violently. At first these hissings, sibilated from various parts of the dark and crowded little gallery, I took to be disapproval of sentiments uttered from the tribune. I was pleased at this apparent evidence of lively interest. But it was only the ushers. The Swiss, by long generations of training, have acquired a genius for keeping order. As janitors, herdsmen, gendarmes, headwaiters, they are perfect. These ushers at the Assembly of the League of Nations were happy men. "You are begged not to applaud" they would cry, in a singular accent, if any of their flock showed animation.

In contrast to this discipline, the official parts of the hall, during the less important speeches, were amazingly informal. After the ringing of the big hand-bell, reminiscent of a farmhouse dinner call, the galleries are shut and the late-comers must content themselves with a peep through the glass doors at M. Vandervelde's whiskers or Herr Stresemann's naked poll. But on the floor and up the grades of the dais there is a constant to and fro. The young functioneers in spats are moving about and whispering. Seats were creaking, young women of great assurance, in free and easy sporting clothes, were on and off the high platforms, chatting with the presiding officers, delegates were greeting one another, newspapers being

read. An unfortunate Italian was in the rostrum, reading his speech from manuscript in very gross French. It was delightful to see how all those who, for one reason or another, had occasion to cross the high-rising terraces behind the rostrum, took the opportunity to register themselves upon that particular junction of Time and Eternity. They would pause, knit the brows in strong torsion of intellect, glance broodily at a sheaf of papers, and come to some mythical decision. In the pews at the side, seemingly reserved for those of high rank, a few pensive statesmen sat in motionless trance. Even their mastery of the sessile arts could not disguise the appalling ennui of a mandarin's life. But the lively little gigolos and undersecretaries, whispering to and fro and dodging in and out through the brown curtains at the back, were having an excellent time. I began to suspect that somewhere behind that brown curtain was a bar; this, I learned later, was a fact. In one corner of the press gallery some sort of *homme d'état,* with cropped hair and cross-bar glasses, was cheerfully dictating a speech to an attractive young woman in mauve. They giggled together. The laborious Italian, whose French accent was a great encouragement to me, threw accents of pathos into his voice, but no one paid any attention. We had arrived at 10:30, and after what seemed a lifetime I gazed cautiously at my watch. It was only 11:40. I slipped cautiously out and went to the lobby to smoke and study the official publications of the League displayed for sale under the tablet in memory of John Huss.

In other words the Assembly of the League is like any

other public meeting. When anyone with the right idea is talking it may be thrilling. When the bores have the floor it doesn't signify. That audience is subject to the hydrotatic parodox valid in all assemblies. A very small quantity of a fluid may exert a quite disproportionate power upon other quantities of fluid no matter how large. A very small quantity of human understanding can move a very large audience.

How well M. Briand understood that. Having first seen the Assembly at its worst (which, after all, was no worse than any conglomerate parliament) it was the more impressive to see it under the sway of a really magnificent speaker. The hall was quiet enough while he was on the platform. The matter of his talk seemed fairly trite—an impassioned plea for international patience and tolerance—but I was not there to analyze matter. I was there, responsible to no one but my own skull, to get the feeling of the thing. It was grand to see him, every display function at work, hands, voice, eyebrows, intonation. How well he knows that the more august an audience is the more it needs a chance to laugh. He strolled blithely to and fro, talking hard as he went; he paused to lean forward and speak directly to Herr Stresemann and the German delegation before him; he knew by perfect instinct when to evoke laughter, when to play upon solemnity. What did it matter what he said? Who was there who did not see in him, and relish, and applaud, something of the quality of France? What a sounding-board of transition, for the Frenchman, are such words as ALORS, or ENCORE. . . . With one of those words, rolled in sus-

pending cadence as he passed from one mood to another, he held us in ecstasy. The whole accent system of the French language lends itself to the charms of declamation. And yet, with the shrewdest ease and simplicity he avoided the taint of the professional chrysostom, the too evidently calculated tropes and modulations and pauses. It was the perfection of paregoric skill, the speech that seems almost like a soliloquy. Even the ushers knew enough not to try to restrain the applause.

Part of the fun is to see all the delegates streaming out of the front door of the Hotel Victoria (attached to the hall) on their way to lunch. For the League is a very human institution, as I have tried to point out; well applauded was the wise interpreter who, when the hour for recess was long past, translated a somewhat lengthy peroration in these single terms: "Monsieur says if we don't adjourn we shall all be late for lunch." They come bustling out into that clear Geneva sunshine, past the newsboys shouting the Berliner *Tageblatt* and the Frankfurter *Zeitung*. (Frankfurter *Zeitung?* remarked a visitor from Dakota—What's he mean, that it's time for a hot dog?) What a kaleidoscope of beards, spats, monocles, Russians, Japanese, Italians. The ironic observer has then some inkling why the U. S. still abstains from the League, for in that panorama you see everything that a certain gland of the American mind is instinctively suspicious of—striped trousers braced up very high, short black coats, cross-bar glasses, beards, women with thick ankles, men with tangent knees, the German shape of knickerbockers, and bushes in green tubs (which always suggest liquor).

They come garrulously out, with that special eagerness that the human race shows toward lunch time, hugging their brief cases and chattering together. The Big Boys step into limousines with little flags, the lesser fry go hurrying toward the Café du Nord or Carlo's Sporting Bar. You overhear little scraps of off-guard conversation. "He's a double-dyed Englishman," remarked an elderly French official to his secretary. "Is that Austen Chamberlain?" said an American. "He looks like Niagara Falls." "I want to know who all these people are," said a lady, impressed by this amazing flux of cosmopolitanism that went streaming by us. "They'd tell you fast enough, if you asked them," was her companion's reply.—Just across the street my eye kept catching the brightly coloured posters of Hagenbeck's Circus.

I hope I haven't seemed too scherzo. No man in his senses would make light of the work the League is trying to do. It is a very human organization, a trifle over-run with volunteer pew-openers, but infinitely appealing to any serious observer who will take the time to see its gallant and painstaking attempt to organize international decency. But also, to the unembittered plebe, some of the by-play of diplomacy is extraordinarily amusing. It was in Geneva that I first heard of Harold Nicolson's gorgeous book *Some People,* which plays such delicate mirth on Foreign Office themes. Not even Max Beerbohm has a wickeder eye for civilized merriment.

WAGON-LITS

A very tiny compartment in a French sleeping-car. At the back, door into the corridor of the car: Left, two berths, one above the other. Right, door into lavatory. Below it a small armchair. Just about room enough for two people to stand side by side. A large dinner bell is rung, off, and a voice is heard.

CONDUCTOR: En voiture, messieursdames!

[*Enter at the back,* HENRY *and* KATHLEEN, *American tourists on their honeymoon, followed by a very villainous looking Swiss porter, in blue smock and heavily bearded, carrying luggage slung on a strap over his shoulder.*]

PORTER: Voilà, Monsieur.

HENRY: Thanks. I mean, mercy, mercy. Here. Quelque chose pour vous. [*Hands him money.*]

KATHLEEN: Oh, darling, isn't this *cunning!* Think of being in a French sleeper! What fun!

PORTER [*holding out money scornfully*]: Monsieur se trompe. L'argent français ne va pas en Suisse.

HENRY: What's he jabbering about? I gave him a whale of a tip. He's crazy. J'ai donné vous beaucoup, beaucoup.

KATHLEEN: Perhaps you gave him French money. We

shouldn't have spent all the last of our Swiss money in that café.

HENRY: He can change it, can't he? Gosh, I can't remember everything. [*Gesticulates to porter.*] Beat it! Vous êtes riche.

PORTER: Madame, les valises étaient bien lourdes, Monsieur ne m'a donné que quelques sous——

HENRY: Oh, Hell! Enfer! Here, take all I've got. [*Gives him pocketful of small change.*]

PORTER: Bien, Monsieur. [*Exit.*]

[*Horn blown, off.*]

HENRY: Not much room, is there. I wonder if there is a club car where we can sit for a while. It's too early to go to bed.

KATHLEEN: It's like being in a bird-cage.

[*Door opens.* CONDUCTOR *puts his head in, and solemnly blows a little squawking instrument at them.*]

HENRY: Yes, and there's the parrot.—Have a cracker?

[CONDUCTOR *looks at them with dignity, and exits. The squawking sound is heard again outside.*]

HENRY: I suppose that means we're off.

[*Looks toward footlights as though peering through window.*] Yes, here we go.

KATHLEEN: I think it's marvellous how well you understand everything. Darling, you're *wonderful!* You really learned all your French in three weeks from the Doubleday advertisements?

HENRY: Sure. But I'm damned tired of scrambled eggs. Oofs broolay! That's the only food those ads tell you how to order.

KATHLEEN: Never mind, darling, some day a big French scrambled egg man will come to town. The boss won't be able to talk to him, and you'll take him out to dinner and close the contract.

HENRY: Where the deuce are we going to put these bags? They're too big to go under the berth. My God, travelling isn't what it's cracked up to be.

KATHLEEN: But think of being in a French sleeping-car on our honeymoon. Gee, I certainly am a lucky girl.

[*Low comedian, as sleeping-car attendant, opens door.*]

L. C.: Monsieurdame! Vous avez tout ce qu'il vous faut?

HENRY: What's he want? I wish they wouldn't talk so fast. Vous parley trop vite!

L. C. [*puzzled*]: Monsieur?

KATHLEEN: He probably wants a tip.

HENRY: I gave the other guy all my change. [*Gesticulates to* L. C. *to indicate that he has no money, turns out his trouser pockets.*]

KATHLEEN: Don't make him angry, darling. Suppose we were ill in the night. Here, I've got some. [*Gives* L. C. *money.*] Pour vous!

L. C.: Merci bien, Madame.

KATHLEEN: Ask him if there's any place where we can sit down awhile.

HENRY: Hum. Hey, Monsieur, vous avez club-car dans ce train?

L. C.: Monsieur?

HENRY: Gosh, he can't even understand French.—Une place où Madame peut—how the devil do you say sit down?—où Madame peut etre comfortable?

L. C.: Mais si, mais si! Le double-V. Voilà, Monsieur. [*Points to door of lavatory.*]

HENRY: Dooblah-Vay?

L. C.: Oui, Monsieur.

KATHLEEN: I think he's talking about the—the bathroom. That's what the chambermaid at the hotel called it, the doublah-vay.

L. C. [*delighted to be understood*]: Oui, Madame. Vous savez le doublah-vay appartient aux deux salons, ne laissez pas l'autre porte fermée.

HENRY: Yes, yes, the doublah-vay. Je comprong. Wee wee!

L. C. [*opening door of lavatory, explaining*]: Voyons, le monsieur dans l'autre coupé a aussi ses necessités naturelles, n'est ce pas? Après faisant usage du cabinet, vous laisserez la serrure ouverte.

HENRY: He seems to want us to go in there. They're extraordinary, these people. Nous comprong, wee wee. Plus tard, plus tard.

L. C.: Bien, Monsieur. [*Exit.*]

KATHLEEN: I guess there's nothing to do but go to bed.

HENRY: We'll never be able to unpack those bags in here. If I open 'em I'll never get 'em shut again.

KATHLEEN: Let's go to bed as we are. Don't bother about nighties. *I* don't mind.

HENRY: Those berths look awfully small.

KATHLEEN: Never mind, darling. Think of it, in a few hours we'll be in France!!

HENRY: Yes, they must have some decent beds there. At least that's what I've always been told. [KATHLEEN

starts to undress.] I'll go out in the passage; give you room to undress.

KATHLEEN: You won't be gone long, darling?

[HENRY *exits.* KATHLEEN *disrobes. Enter* CONDUCTOR.]

CONDUCTOR: Pardon, Madame. Il faut vous avertir que la visite de douane aura lieu a Bellegarde, vers minuit——

KATHLEEN: Go away! How dare you come in without knocking?

CONDUCTOR: Madame, la visite de douane——

KATHLEEN: Tell my husband. I don't understand.

CONDUCTOR: Ve visit you here; it is ze custom——

KATHLEEN: I don't like the custom. Go away!

[*Exit* CONDUCTOR. KATHLEEN *goes into lavatory. Voices heard, off.*]

CONDUCTOR: Pardon, Monsieur, mais c'est defendu de se stationner dans le couloir.

HENRY: Wee wee.

CONDUCTOR: Il ne faut pas fermer la porte, parce que la visite de douane——

HENRY: No comprong. Oofs broolay!

CONDUCTOR: I tell Madame, ve visit her in bed during ze night; it is ze French customs—

HENRY: It's a hell of a custom. Wee wee, wee wee.

[*Enter* HENRY. *Sees that* KATHLEEN *is not there, looks anxiously under berth, then taps at door of lavatory.*]

KATHLEEN [*within*]: Go away, you horrible creature! I'll tell my husband.

HENRY [*tenderly*]: All right, darling. This is Boydie.

KATHLEEN [*within*]: This is Teenie.

[HENRY *begins to undress.*]

KATHLEEN [*within*]: Darling, I haven't cleaned my teeth. I hope you won't mind. [*A pause.*] I'll be out in a moment, Boydie. Are you impatient? [KATHLEEN *emerges in her chemise.*] Oh, darling! You were gone such a long time. [*Embraces.*] Oh, you frightened me so. I thought it was the conductor. He said he was going to visit me in the night.

HENRY: I'm damned if he will. [*Locks the door.*]

KATHLEEN: But that does sound as though we were getting near France, doesn't it. [*She gets into lower berth, he undresses.*] Boydie, do all Frenchmen have beards? Do you suppose their wives like it?—Oooh, it's awfully cold in these sheets without anything on.

HENRY: I don't suppose they grow them until they've been married quite a while.

KATHLEEN: Well, if I ever see you growing a beard I'll know what to think. My, this train goes fast, doesn't it? I'm just rattling around in this berth. I wish we hadn't drunk so much dinner. It's made me sleepy.

HENRY: I thought we might as well get rid of that Swiss money.

KATHLEEN: It seems such a waste of time to be sleeping on a trip like this.—Wouldn't the folks at home be surprised if they could see us now? What do you suppose they're doing?

HENRY: At the movies, most likely.

KATHLEEN: I wonder what's on at the Paramount this week? Oh, Boydie, wouldn't it be swell to be just

going in to the Paramount, and then Roseland afterwards, and a stack of wheats at Childs! You know I don't think any of this wine they give you over here is near as good as a nice pineapple caramel soda.

HENRY [*climbs into upper berth*]: Maybe we can get a soda in Paris.

KATHLEEN: There was a new Harold Lloyd release announced that ought to crash through just about now.

HENRY: Yeah, but they won't get that over in this damn country for a hell of a long time. Gosh, it was terrible! All the pictures they were showing in Geneva were as old as mothballs. The only decent thing we saw on the whole trip was that Greta Garbo in Florence.

KATHLEEN: Yes, that was real cats. Was that United Artists?

HENRY: No *sir,* that was Metro-Goldwyn. If that bird Mussolini was a real statesman he'd tear down some of those old ruins and colosseums and build a real picture house. It's depressing to see so many old ruins about. It gives people a bad reaction; it hurts business.

KATHLEEN: Do you suppose the folks are really at the movies at this minute? There's a difference in time, isn't there? It's only about three o'clock in Bronxville.

HENRY: Sure; they're just getting ready to take in the afternoon show.—Well, I guess a fellow's got to travel sometimes; it opens up the mind.

KATHLEEN: Are you all right up there, darling? Your sheets aren't cold? Perhaps I ought to come up and warm them for you.

HENRY: I'm all right. I'm going to read this French

time-table. It gives all the dope about crossing the frontier. I'm not going to let these frogs put anything over on me. [*Opens time-table booklet and begins to read.*] You know these French timetables are really a scream —"Among the baggages that may accompany the passenger into the compartment is a baby's bathtub."

KATHLEEN [*sleepily*]: It would have to be a very small baby.—Boydie, do you suppose we'll have a little baby some day?

HENRY: Not if we travel in trains like this.

KATHLEEN: Heavens, what's that?

[*A knocking on the door.*]

HENRY: Your friend the conductor, I suppose. Good Lord, you didn't encourage him, did you?

KATHLEEN: Don't pay any attention.

HENRY: It might be something important.

[*Leans out from his berth and unbolts door, which opens to reveal* 2D HEAVY, *as an anxious but very polite foreigner, bearded, in nightshirt and nightcap.*] Gosh, it's Santa Claus.

2D HEAVY: Pardon, Monsieur—Madame, je suis fâché de vous déranger mais vous m'avez fermé la porte, je ne peux pas visiter le cabinet——

HENRY: Listen—we don't want visitors. No visite, no visite.

2D HEAVY: Mais, mon Dieu, on ne peut pas passer par la porte——

KATHLEEN: Passport! He wants to see our passport!

HENRY: Oh, I get you, Steve. [2D HEAVY *tries to come into the compartment.*] Now, wait a minute; don't be

in a hurry [*pushes him back*]. Where the devil did I put that damn thing? [*Leaps out of bunk, rummages in his clothes.*]

KATHLEEN: Boydie, it's in my purse. I'll get it. [*Starts to get out of bed, jumps back with a scream, remembering her attire.*] He's coming right in. Get out, you wicked old man!

2D HEAVY: Bêtise, tonnerre! Vous avez fermé la porte, la porte du cabinet, cabinet de toilette, lavabo, comprenez-vous?

HENRY [*showing passport*]: No comprong, no comprong. Here you are—passport, passport; all OK. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Nordic, Bronxville, N. Y.

2D HEAVY [*in despair*]: Gott, er ist verruckt. La porte du cabinet, fermé de mon côté.

HENRY: He's cuckoo. [*Imitates sound of cuckoo clock.*] Oofs broolay!

[*With a cry* 2D HEAVY *pushes past and rushes into the lavatory.*]

Oh, the good old doublah-vay. Well, that's what I call hospitality!

KATHLEEN: Oh, I'm afraid it's my fault. I locked the other door. You see, the bathroom belongs to both compartments.

HENRY: Good Lord! Well, live and learn. [*Locks both doors and returns to his berth. Reads aloud from time-table.*] "In view of avoiding all difficulty and all delay at the time of the passage at the frontiers, Sirs the Voyagers have interest to make to the agents of the customs declarations exact and complete of the contents

of the baggages"! Say! Those Fatimas we bought in Geneva—where did we put them? [*No answer; he looks down from his berth and sees that she is asleep.*] Oh, well, the devil with it.

[*He turns out the light. After a moment's pause there is a heavy pounding on the door.*]

KATHLEEN: Judas, what is it now? [*Switches on the light.*] Don't let him in again. I shall have hysterics.

HENRY [*opening door a crack*]: What do you want? This isn't a comfort station.

[*Enter two customs officers in uniform.*]

1ST CUS.: La visite de douane, Monsieur.

2D CUS.: Vous n'avez rien à declarer?

HENRY [*pointing to door of lavatory*]: Dooblah-vay, dooblah-vay!

[*The officers look at each other, then open door of lavatory and look in suspiciously.*]

1ST CUS.: Ce sont des étrangers. Américains?

HENRY: Wee wee. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Nordic, Bronxville, N. Y.

2D CUS.: You 'ave nozzing to declare? No jewellery, precious stone, cigars, cigarettes?

HENRY: Wee wee—I mean No, not a darn thing, except about half a pack of Fatimas.

1ST CUS.: You pardon, we make research.

[*Researches into the upper berth.*]

HENRY: Hey, stop tickling me. [*Leaps out of berth.*]

2D CUS.: Madame, she remove herself also from ze bed so ve can pay tribute to her honesty?

[KATHLEEN, *modestly draping a blanket round her, emerges from the berth as they rummage in it.*]

1ST CUS.: Mais, Madame, vous êtes charmante! Monsieur, you are ze lucky man.

2D CUS.: You may smoke ze liddle half-pack of Fatimas in honour of so lofely wifemate. It is perhaps your first time in la France?

KATHLEEN: I think they're darlings! Is this really the frontier?

1ST CUS.: Oui, certainement, Madame!

HENRY: Hot dog—I mean, oofs broolay!

KATHLEEN: Boydie, we're in France! [*She embraces* 1ST CUS.]

CURTAIN

MLLE DE SOMBREUIL

I

IF I should ever blossom into a writer on crime and gallantry, it would all be due to L. S. H. One day, a couple of years ago, I received a charming note from those initials (of whose identity I know nothing) asking if I would care to accept some French books there was no room for on L. S. H.'s shelves. Somewhat tardily, and even I fear without very mannerly enthusiasm, I replied that if there were anything L. S. H. really wanted to be rid of and thought I would be excited about, I should be very happy, etc. Presently arrived a vast packing case by express. Already incapable of dealing with surplus volumes, I was so appalled at the size of the box that it lay unopened for many weeks before I had courage to find tools and burst it. And then the amazing happened. The box was stuffed full of treasures. I could fill this page several times over just in telling you what was in that box. And, knowing neither L. S. H.'s name nor address (there was a card, but I've lost it) I've never been able to say any decent word of gratitude nor describe the good times I've had.

For, among many other things of quite different sort, there were a lot of French books on crime and oddity.

The Memoirs of M. Goron, for instance, the famous Parisian Chef de la Sûreté. The books of Dr. Cabanès: *Curiosités de la Médecine, Poisons et Sortilèges, Les Indiscretions de l'Histoire,* etc. But, most priceless of all, a long run of Bataille's annual series of *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines.* Of these I sing. All beautifully bound in red leather, a complete file from 1880 to 1898, dealing with every horror and humour of the erring world (as only French criminologists can) they make the Arabian Nights seem pale. There is no need for me to lament the passing of Sherlock Holmes, the ignoble dearth of good shockers. As a mine of horrid plots, an encyclopædia of low humour, or a stimulus for grisly nightmare, Bataille is the man for me. The comedy of some of his mundane causes makes our smartest weeklies mere Sunday School talk; and the purging horror of some of the crimes is far beyond the rue Morgue standard. I know now, also, where some of our modern writers on murder got their stuff.

These cases, mind you, are not literary re-writes. They are transcript of actual testimony and official proceedings. What fodder for winter nights! I hope I shan't be accused of being "quaint" when I say that to pour out a good tall one of brandy and hot water, stretch one's feet toward the fire, and settle down to the Affaire Peltzer or the Affaire Chambige, is a pretty good way to spend an evening. The real connoisseur of crime, nurtured on *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines,* will never again take poor darling Sherlock too seriously. I blush to admit it, but really, you rise from Bataille a better man—and thoroughly scared.

If I go steadily on, there will not be one colourful crime committed in France, from 1880 to 1898, that I don't know about (except that by excess of reading I get the details mixed, and accuse the man who only stole corpses from the cemetery of having been the one who pushed his mother-in-law into the fireplace). I shall have learned a good deal of French too, though not all of a sort that I can use. What gorgeous titles in that collection of tales. Consider:

Paris infâme: une mère proxénète
Les Trois Modistes du Comte de la Mothe
La Paternité du pharmacien Blandet
Le Vampire de Saint-Ouen
La Belle Coutelière de Thiers
La Jeune Fille au Perroquet
Les Assassins du Curé d'Armentières
Les Faiseurs d'Anges de Langogne
Le dernier amour d'un vieux turfiste
M. et Mme. Stern: un ménage américain
La Machine infernale de Saint-Julien
Une Femme Enterrée dans le champ de bataille de Waterloo
L'Homme aux 54 Enfants

If there are any tabloid publishers in the house, these ought to make their mouths water.

But these cases are not all ablative. Bataille is not all Murder and Sudden Death. If we might be permitted a little excursion into low life, I can't resist the story of Mlle de Sombreuil. Any lover of Paris must feel kindly

towards her. Poor dear, how often they deported her and how resolutely she came back to the town she understood. M. Bataille calls it a "tintamaresque history" and says, rather disconsolately, that it shows what a state of social decomposition there was in the year 1886. But I think Bataille is just a little less than gallant to the lady. She hadn't much chic, which no Parisian can quite forgive. She was a blonde, perhaps that's how she got away with it.

Poor Mlle de Sombreuil. In the first place she had no birthright to the aristocratic name. Her father was a German merchant in Constantinople, and her real name was Louise Schneider. But even that we can't swear to, because (one of the amazing little by-stories that crop up in these affairs) one of her brothers swore she was a changeling. It was reputed that Herr Schneider's nurse, taking baby Louise for an airing, allowed her to fall into the Black Sea where she drowned. Afraid to confess this to her philoprogenitive employer, the nurse bought a Circassian baby and substituted it. I like this legend: if our Mademoiselle was a Circassian that will condone much. But whether Circassian or German, Bataille has to admit that she was "Parisienne et boulevardière dans le sang."

She's a little the worse for wear as we first see her in court (November 26, 1886). She gives her age as twenty-eight, but M. Bataille says the court clerk is still laughing at that. He says she looks a bit like an elderly nursemaid, her complexion is leaden and she is "insolently" powdered. She's wearing a tight little "jaquette

à capuchon" (I'm not quite clear just what that looks like) and over her yellow chignon is a hat with swan's plumes—symbol of innocence, says the ironical Bataille. But her gloves are fresh and clean, and I like that in her.

Well, here you are again, says the judge, and we learn the sad fact that this is Mademoiselle's fifth appearance before the law. The first time she was given a month for blackmail; the second, a month for "détournement d'objets saisis." Does one translate that embezzling? or disposal of stolen goods? Anyhow, after the second affair she was expelled from the country as an undesirable alien. She was told to elongate herself from France. Twice already she has returned, after her elongations. Now for the third time she is back in Paris. M. Chérot, speaking for the state, says she is an adventuress. She is a dangerous and violent woman. While awaiting trial she threw a piece of bread in the matron's face and said that there would be heads broken. The case, says M. Chérot, is vulgar and sordid. It's simply a matter of a *fille entretenue,* already several times expelled, who defies the law and deserves a severe lesson.

But, as you may have suspected, there's a reason why this little story—classify it how you will—rises high enough for the pages of Bataille who requires a certain celebrity in his causes. Poor Mademoiselle happens to have been a very particular friend of Mr. Vergoin, a well-known lawyer and a member of the Chamber of Deputies —as we would say, a congressman. And so, treading

lightly and briefly, let us follow Mademoiselle's very witty counsel, the famous Maître Demange.

She came to Paris at eighteen, says M. Demange. Her heart was ardent, her head was hot. It was the fault of the sunshine of Circassia, he suggests. She fell in love with M. de Sombreuil, who deserted her with a baby. So perhaps our Mademoiselle did earn a right to the name she clung to, and for which M. Bataille chaffs her. What became of the baby, the report does not tell. As far as our story is concerned it falls into the Black Sea of oblivion. But M. Demange says she was a good mother, and for two years she struggled against misery. Then, a dramatic shift. A money-changer of Lyons introduced her to the wealthy M. Féder, director of a famous bank. This bank was on the verge of a crash, though poor Mademoiselle didn't know it. M. Féder installs her in a "coquettish little apartment" in the rue de Constantinople. (I seem to see a touch of sentiment here. Surely our Circassian is not as hard-boiled as they pretend.) But M. Féder's bank failed, with a resounding scandal. M. Féder skipped out and left Mademoiselle with a lot of expensive furniture unpaid. Mademoiselle, exasperated (it is M. Demange's word) tried to get money out of Marieton, the Lyons money-changer who had introduced Féder to her. Apparently her methods were direct: anyhow she was sentenced for blackmail, and also served with a decree of expulsion.

She returned to Paris to get her baggage. During her absence her effects had been sold. She tried to commit suicide: she shot herself, aiming at the heart (her region of least resistance) but the wound was not fatal. When

she came out of the hospital they put her in prison for one day for not having obeyed the decree of elongation. But her mercurial temperament came to her rescue. She met a gentleman, a négociant, who evidently saw she needed building up. He took her to Tréport, that cheerful little Norman watering place. I like to imagine them there. But the money-changer heard about it. He seems to have been a skunk, that discreditable Lyonnais. There is probably more than we know behind their relations: but anyhow he was indignant to learn that she was enjoying herself at a balneary station. He had her arrested and again she was jailed for being still in France. Coming out of jail, however, she lived happily with her négociant for two years, at 14, Avenue Hoche. As the delightful Demange puts it—

> Quand elle conjugue le verbe *aimer,* on la laisse en repos; mais quand l'amant, quel qu'il soit, se fatigue, on met à exécution l'arrêté d'expulsion. C'est ce qui advint encore quant le négociant eut assez d'elle. Aussitôt les agents du ministère de l'intérieur reparurent et invitérent Mlle de Sombreuil à déguerpir.

To M. Vergoin, the deputy, our harassed Mademoiselle had gone, with a note of introduction from her previous lawyer, to try to get some mitigation of her decree of exile. Exile from Paris, from its dear life of terrasse and apéritif, of café chantant and coquettish little apartments—not to be thought of! Oh happy days in the Avenue Hoche—sunset in the wide space round the Arc de Triomphe, and all the little dogs being taken for

walks along the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne! There's an Unknown Soldier now under the Arch of Triumph, but I see our Mademoiselle as an unknown soldier too, in her own peculiar warfare. The Siege of Paris! Perhaps there *was* German blood in her.

Anyhow, to M. Vergoin she repairs. And M. Vergoin, the influential congressman, makes representations in the department of the Interior, and Mademoiselle's elongation is suspended. And as you can imagine her gratitude is warm. In the case of our Mademoiselle, gratitude takes its most personal coefficient; and besides, chic or not chic, M. le Député had fallen for her charms. Moreover Mademoiselle, by this time, was beginning to see the great truth that Maître Demange points out in his witty plaidoirie. As long as she is living with someone she is safe; the moment she falls, so to speak, into the public domain, she will be elongated from the city she loves. Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Circassia.

M. Vergoin sets her up at the Hôtel des Capucines. I don't quite remember where is the Hôtel des Capucines. Is it in the street of that name? Then it's not far from the Madeleine, and also, you observe, right across the river from the Chamber—just a pleasant stroll for M. le Député. This was, I'll wager, a cheerful promotion for Mademoiselle de Sombreuil. No more money-changers, small négociants, defaulting bankers. Mistress of an homme de politique! What possible visions may she not have imagined? Perhaps it was to celebrate the Capucines interlude that she got the tight little jacquette à capuchon. But alas the dream was brief. M. Vergoin, the radical

deputy from Seine-et-Oise, began to think seriously about his career. This little liaison might compromise him in the Chamber, where the position of a radical was unstable anyhow. Quite quietly he slipped out of Mademoiselle's sight.

By this time our heroine cannot be blamed for a certain disbelief in the intentions of the staglike sex. Issuing from her apartment at the Capucines, perhaps to walk across the Bridge of Concord and see if there were any sign of the laggard deputy, she notices herself persistently followed by two gentlemen. She calls a gendarme and protests; all three are taken to the station-house—*conducted to the violin* is the classic French phrase. There, after explanations, the horrid truth appears: the two pursuivants are plain clothes men, agents of the Minister of the Interior. Mademoiselle remains at the violin for ten days. Then she is made mount in a "cellular carriage" and is debarked en route for Circassia. She is forwarded to Marseilles, after eight lamentable tarryings in provincial prisons by the way.

II

PERHAPS, in my enjoyment of M. Bataille's *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines,* I lay myself open to the old French mot "Avez-vous lu Baruch?" The story is that once Racine lent La Fontaine a Bible; La Fontaine fell upon the book of Baruch for the first time, was staggered by its power, and exclaimed "Quel était donc ce Baruch? c'était un bien beau génie!" And thereafter the cheerful fabulist went about asking his friends if they'd

read Baruch. So the phrase became proverbial for anyone who discovers and ejaculates what is old familiar matter to the well informed. Perhaps all the young Macaulays know Bataille already, and I am only (in Baruch's own phrase) a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers.

At any rate one has good company in one's admiration. In one of the annuals (1888) no less a person than Paul Bourget contributes a preface of homage to M. Bataille as a psychological reporter. M. Bourget says, and justly indeed, how valuable these case-reports are, not only to the philosopher and the moralizer, but to the novelist. "The crimes of an epoch," he says, "are a very important chapter in the history of the soul of that epoch." There is perhaps some typical literary man's exaggeration in that remark; for probably the crimes of all epochs are much the same in essence, and fall into very simple classification.

The particular little Parisian Nights' Entertainment that I selected for you from M. Bataille's wealth is, of course, a trifling one. And yet, slight as it is, what a novel one could make of it. Can't you imagine what an experienced opener of hearts, one who knew his demi-monde, could do with Mlle de Sombreuil? She is pure—I mean sheer—de Maupassant. One has to remind oneself continually that she is not just a character in fiction but a real person—might even be living to this day, though I admit it unlikely.

We left her on her way to Marseilles in a "voiture cellulaire," whatever that may be. Would they have sent her all the way by road, in a Black Maria? Yet the

journey can hardly have been done by train, if it took eight days. Arrived at Marseilles she had to wait a week for a ship to Constantinople. Apparently she now had some freedom of circulation, for she went to a hotel. Evidently the hardships of the cellular vehicle had not impaired her capacity to charm. For staying in that hotel whom should she find, and subjugate, but another congressman—M. Guillot, deputy from the Isère. He, like a true Southerner, was not backward in chivalrous sympathy. I imagine them sitting in some brasserie of that lively town, and Mademoiselle telling her troubles. Give us a little tzigane music, chef d'orchestre, and the lively traffic of the Cannebière (Plût à Dieu that I see that street some day!) and I can imagine M. Guillot rising to the occasion. Of course, he says, the decree of elongation is all a mistake; there's some misunderstanding somewhere; besides, that old law of 1847 about expulsions applies only to political offenders. Certainly not, Mademoiselle, to anyone as charming as yourself . . . whose only errors, if I may say so, Mademoiselle, have been those generous ones you were divinely created to collaborate. . . . I can hear the deputy from the Isère saying these things, I see him twirl his moustache.

So Mademoiselle feels that she has found a friend again. And then, delightful coincidence, when she asks him about his colleague, the vanished M. Vergoin, it appears that gentleman is at this very moment conducting a case at law in Aix—only a few kilometres away. There is surely some misunderstanding that can be cleared up. Like a gallant man, M. Guillot himself escorts her to

Aix. Evidently the Chamber is on vacation, and the deputies are off mending their fences. They find M. Vergoin in the court room, they sit listening to his speech. Does it startle M. Vergoin when he sees, so unexpectedly, the swan-plume hat in the audience? He had supposed his mistress well on her way to Circassia. We don't really know enough about M. Vergoin to hazard any opinions. Anyhow, according to Maître Demange (Mademoiselle's attorney, you remember) the lady returned to Marseilles escorted now by both deputies.

It is a gay little nicety of human conduct: perhaps finding his colleague so enthusiastic reanimated the embers of M. Vergoin? The situation was now almost that of a Cluny farce: our heroine so closely attended by her two congressmen that neither would let the other out of his sight. A verbal process of their conversations would be a priceless document surely. As in the song of the men of Marseilles, the day of glory was arrived. Mademoiselle, squired by two members of Parliament, must have thought herself secure. But another pair of followers was also on the job. For the next evening, while the trio were dining merrily in a modish restaurant (I wish its name were given, I should love to hunt it out) enter two "agents." I see poor Mademoiselle turn pale as they approach the table. I see MM. Vergoin and Guillot halted with the wine cup half raised. At the moment, Mademoiselle's legal residence is Marseilles (pending her elongation to Circassia) and the trip to Aix was a contravention. She is under arrest.

Whatever may have been the jealousies of the two

deputies, they are united against the common foe. They protest furiously, but the policemen are firm. M. Guillot particularly is outraged. If the lady is taken off to jail at this time of night, he says he will go too. He will protect her against indignity. He will have a cot put for himself in her cell. M. Vergoin, for his part, though it is two hours of the morning, gets the prefect of police out of bed and they telegraph to Paris. At last—after some dreary waiting, I expect—the reply comes from the Minister of the Interior. He authorizes the liberation of the prisoner on condition that M. Vergoin, on returning to Paris, will call on him and make a personal explanation of the affair.

Here the gallant M. Guillot disappears from the record. He goes back to his constituents in the Isère, I suppose. M. Vergoin resumes his burden like a white man. He returns to Paris—with Mlle de Sombreuil; and on the morrow of their return, as M. Demange so charmingly puts it, the deputy and the young woman saw the sun rise together.

But for the last time. Was it the interview with the Minister of the Interior that frightened the deputy? Anyhow, again M. Vergoin disappeared from the presumably eastern-facing Hôtel des Capucines. Mademoiselle, very unquiet in mind, was rash enough to set forth to look for him. Two agents grabbed her and hustled her off to the station. This time they would take no risk of her waiting for a ship at Marseilles. They handed her a ticket for Constantinople, and kept her under scrutiny until the train pulled out.

It's a long journey. I've even taken the trouble to look it up in my Livret-Chaix. Supposing that the trains in 1886 ran on much the same schedule as now, and supposing they put her on the Simplon Orient express, she would leave the Gare de Lyons at 20:35 and get to Stamboul at 17:15 on the fourth day. The first stop the train would make is at Laroche-Migennes, at 10:43 P.M. Those tall poplar trees along the canal (it runs right by the station platform) would be rustling in the cool evening air; and I hope indeed that she had enough money in her purse to go to the buffet for a sandwich and one of those bottles of Sauterne with the cork already loosened. But what a journey for a hat with swan's plumes.

Yet if you think that Mademoiselle's boulevarding spirit was broken, how little you know her. She was merely recoiling for a strong saltation. It appears that she stayed in Constantinople only briefly—long enough to get the swan's plumes cleaned and to revisit old sentimental haunts along the Black Sea waterfront where the careless nursemaid went pramming. She had thoroughly grasped the theory of her decree of expulsion, and so, as soon as she had found a reliable gentleman who was going to Paris, she returned there with him. The identity of this client we do not know, but he also, like the earlier négociant, had bainsdemerist tastes. They had a little holiday, in the warm days of August, at Ostend. (I should have loved to see Mademoiselle in a bathing costume of the 1886 mode.) But then, coming back to town, she not unnaturally went to the Hôtel des Capucines to get her

luggage, which she had to leave behind when she was hurried off to the Golden Horn. There they refused to surrender her things until the bill was paid. The baggage had remained in the room—the room of the sunrise—all this time, two months. And the room, said the management, must be paid for.

Mademoiselle believed, says her attorney, that according to the custom of "gens du monde," M. Vergoin ought to pay. She wrote to him; he refused. Mademoiselle sent the lady of the hotel, Mme Noël, to treat with him. M. Vergoin replied that he had already spent twelve or fifteen hundred francs on her, he was through. "Que voulez-vous messieurs?" adds the amusing M. Demange. "Avant d'être député, M. Vergoin a été magistrat en province—et dans le mileu austère où il a vécu, on ne se rend pas bien compte de l'étendue des sacrifices qu'il faut faire sur l'autel des divinités parisiennes." But now we can't help sympathizing with Mademoiselle's suspicion that M. Vergoin was acting double in some of these manœuvres, for again, as soon as she tried to get in touch with him the two famous agents reappear. She is arrested once more, and it is in these circumstances that we find her in court—"insolently powdered."

I don't feel that M. Vergoin comes out of it very well. There is a long letter from him, read into the testimony, in which he insists that all the public scandal of the affair has been worked up to discredit him politically. I am not concerned to analyze the problem too

minutely; but I do feel that at least he should have paid the rent for the sunrise.

But the latest *ami,* the bainsdemerist of Ostend, was still loyal, and so Maître Demange's final plea for his client seems to me reasonable enough. "Leave her in Paris, then," he says, "since she is not a dangerous woman, since she has not threatened Monsieur the deputy as was alleged. Leave her in this Paris she loves, since she is in the company of a friend, and you have made a habit of not bothering her when she has a protector. Be indulgent to her, gentlemen, for surely she has never been able to take seriously a decree of expulsion so capriciously exercised. And you, Parisians, you also can be reassured henceforward, for you will have the services of the two policemen who followed her about incessantly, and who can now go back to their jobs." This final merriment of M. Demange "soulève dans l'auditoire une explosion de rires inextinguibles."

The court, after a brief deliberation, sentenced Mademoiselle to a month in prison. M. Bataille adds that at the end of her imprisonment the decree of expulsion was again put into effect. This means, I suppose, that the protective impulse of the sea bather did not survive a thirty-day anesthesia. She is living in Brussels at the moment, says Bataille—"but she has vowed to return to Paris, and she is a woman to keep her word."

Poor Mademoiselle! She may have been a tough and tiresome person; it is true that she seems to have had an incapacity to retain her admirers. It was with her, very likely, as with Mr. Don Marquis's mehitabel, being ab-

ducted so many times had spoiled her for a wife. But somehow, between the lines of the testimony, I seem to feel something that deserves respect. She never spoke for herself at the trial: when questioned by the judge she confided the whole matter to the eloquence of her lawyer. Perhaps, brooding the various griefs and escapades of her career, she felt incapable of doing justice to her inward light. As she looked round the court-room, on that dark November day, did she feel the Paris she loved slipping tragically away from her? Did she see a panorama of receding paramours—the aristocratic M. de Sombreuil, the defaulting banker, the worthy négociant, the congressmen, the bainsdemerist? I'm not a bit surprised that she threw the bread in the matron's face.

Brussels, of course, is as good a substitute as she could find. But you have guessed by now what she felt about Paris. Did she get back there? I hope and believe she did.

TOUCH WOOD

I

NEWS of his death sent one outdoors, so clear, so hale, so mild a day in brown January. Regret not me, he once said; lover of cider and women and the country dance, noticer of all the things of earth, how often he had made suggestion in his poems of ways we might greet his memory when he was gone.

It could not be done indoors; and thankfully it did not have to be done in the city, in an office, among palaver and the goodly merriments of one's fellows. It was strange to think that even thousands of miles from where he lay silent, telephones must ring and editors make their arrangements because he had "doffed his wrinkled gear." But here was bright silence, a morning spring-like, savoury earth in thaw, the clean tracery of bare trees on blue. And by some deep instinct every thought was of plain and elemental things. One wanted to smell earth, to touch wood, to taste cold water, to light fires. One thought of bread and salt and apples; of the gestures of country toil, of the marshy pond and the crowing of cocks. One thought of his poems, simple and nourishing as a bowl of bread and milk to tastes long overfed with rich delicates.

A morning for simple things, not a morning for (you remember the Preface to his *Late Lyrics,* in 1922) "the knowingness affected by junior reviewers." On so halcyon a sky, in such clear memory of all things dear, one could see the proud and puzzled heads that one had loved, profiled against darkness. Even the dark would perhaps be tender to such heads. And he, who made the hearts of men and women his brooding study, and who knew that no lesser study is worthy of man's full power, would have welcomed the magic of that western air. Instinct, enriched by thought of him, made one quick to see and hear things close at hand. The laughter of three small girls, singing as they were taken to school; the easy loafing attitude of men strewing cinders on the road: the slack working gesture of the negro and the Mediterranean, but perhaps not so different from his own Wessex labourers. In the thick dead leaves the old dog lay curled, raising his hairy jowls of Socrates to scan a neighbour's quick hens picking a trespass on his land, but too indolent with age and sunshine to protest. He growled a little inwardly, and pretended that with such shaggy brows he did not see them. In the village post office the garage man, usually so active, was sitting for a little philosophy. "There's not ten men in a hundred," I overheard him say, "who could tell you they never take a drink. Well, life's what you make it."

One wanted to think about things that were very real and humble. He was going back to earth, and earth everywhere was richer for it. One thought of clean things and sharp things; of troubled ironies and shy pangs. One

wanted, I say, to touch wood; to hear the crescendo secant of a saw-blade going through logs, to feel and smell the fresh section. One raked and rummaged, aimlessly perhaps, but alert to notice the shapes of pebbles, the feel of stick and stone, the colour and smell of bonfire smoke. One could not have easily explained to any visitor that in burning a pile of trash in the back lot one was trying to pay honour to Thomas Hardy; but so it was.

There was a soft clear night when a charm was laid on winter, wind, and water; when a group of people met by fire and moonlight to play picnic. "Pan, that old Arcadian Knight," random echo from some old song, was their toast, and there was much halloo. Flame was fierce and golden in the hearth and all the watersides glazed with Tennysonian lustre; every prospect pleased and perhaps only John Barleycorn was vile. Yet the occasion was not quite what these jolly truants had dreamed. It was a picnic, not quite a transmigration. Perhaps it should have been conducted without benefit of orgy. Perhaps, to be most perfectly memorable, things must not be too eagerly anticipated. And the odd thing was, so one of these revellers told me, that the most lovely episode in that night of dim silver, was passing the morning milk-wagon as they drove gaily to catch Port Washington's famous 3:46 A.M. train. There, one of Borden's crepuscule galaxy, was the ambling vehicle, with lantern swinging from the axle and Lizzie Borden, the patient piebald, drawing her exuberant freight. Alas that some of these gallants were themselves too piebald to observe the pretty scene, as the milk-wagon emerged in the glare

of their speeding lamps. But so, under our merriest anæsthetics, continues the sober tread of humble service and poor human need.

This, I think, Hardy never forgot. He ran the scale of all observations, from the starry nebula to the country girl's garters, but even in writing of Shelley's skylark he remembered the actual pinch of fragile dust that it now may be. I think he never forgot of what sweet craving earth we are put together. Death puts even the greatest at the mercy of random pens. There will be many a yard of print, long prepared in newspaper morgues, about his "pessimism," regardless of his own definite disclaimer. It was not "pessimism" (only a label, anyhow) he said, but simply "questioning." We will be reminded of his

> Sit on Sundays in my chair
> And read that moderate man Voltaire

as evidence of irreligion; yet it was he who so strongly appealed, in almost his last public word, for "an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality—which must come" (he added) "by means of the interfusing effect of poetry." Those who saw him most often toward the end describe for us the beautiful serenity of his old age, which was certainly not that of a pessimist. But the word means nothing anyhow—

> Let me enjoy the earth no less
> Because the all-enacting Might
> That fashioned forth its loveliness
> Had other aims than my delight.

I have never chanced to find anything of Hardy's in an anthology of humorous verse, and yet there are some of his pieces ("The Ruined Maid," for instance) which will explode any gathering in laughter. Eddie Guest, to my way of thinking, is a far gloomier bard. Occasionally even, by an odd transfusion of J. Gordon Coogler, the laughter was, I fear, unpremeditated. I have never been able to be quite solemn about "The Newcomer's Wife." Outside a pub the Newcomer hears some unpleasant truths about his bride of the preceding week—

> That night there was the splash of a fall
> Over the slimy harbour-wall:
> They searched, and at the deepest place
> Found him with crabs upon his face.

Someone is sure to reiterate the old legend that it was pique or deep indignation at fool criticisms that turned Hardy from the novel to poetry. That seems to me inconceivable. A man of his vitality and toughness writes as and how he pleases; and the sequence of a man's work obeys laws deeper than publicity. He turned to poetry, one may guess, because he could better express in that measure what he wanted to say. He had things to say that could hardly be uttered in prose: so has every human being. Well might most men—even a Shakespeare or a Milton—having finished *The Dynasts* at the age of sixty-seven—rest on their blotters. But see how, past seventy, he began life anew, and wrote still a whole bookfull of exquisite song. Even if we of this age had nothing else to be proud of could we not say, We were alive, actual

denizens of this planet, when *The Dynasts* was written.

The history of the future would be written, he said in one of his most gnomic verses,

> Not as the loud had spoken
> But as the mute had thought.

He spoke for the mute—and one might remember that a Semichorus of Years or Pities is just as mute as a Wessex milkmaid. He spoke for the mute, and for all that is most dumb, most craving, most troubled in ourselves. His consolation (you remember his poem "The Subalterns") was that of the British viceroy in Ireland in the old days, who received a letter: "My Lord, this is to inform you that we shall kill you to-morrow, but nothing personal is intended." So, he tells us, life "looks less fell" when we realize that Storm, Sickness and Death are also slaves, and move under sealed orders: their attentions to us mean nothing personal. In a haphazard so vast all eventually acquiesce. But when we see—as oh with what imperilled clearness we do see—faces we love outlined against the dark, see the double question of their eyes, then we can sometimes turn, for pain and beauty, to his stoic lovingkindness. Love, jealousy, anger, greed, cruelty, glamour—all these are the commonplaces of literature; we have been familiar with them in books for so many years. Yet how startled, how indignant, how amazed—even how grateful—we all are when they happen to ourselves.

Once I had a letter from a railway mail-clerk in

Nebraska, in which he told me that Hardy was his favourite writer. Crossing those wide prairies in a mail car would be a perfect place to think about him. To think about him needs a sense of space, of quiet, of earth's edge against the wind. One must be able to think of laughter and folly, of country festival, of lips and hands and hair. One must be able to touch wood, light fire, taste wine and bread and salt, things elemental and sacramental. So I have cut logs and brought them in, and I shall burn them to-night in homage of Thomas Hardy.

II

He had to be dead before they could make him mix much with merely literary society. It is queer to think that Westminister Abbey was perhaps his first real London club. When they buried his ashes there, they sprinkled Wessex earth into the grave. But his heart is in the country churchyard. Reading of that rather ghastly double sepulture, one turns again to the strange poem "His Heart," in *Moments of Vision*—

> It was inscribed like a terrestrial sphere
> With quaint vermiculations close and clear—
> Yes, there at last, eyes opened, did I see
> His whole sincere symmetric history;
> There were his truth, his simple singlemindedness,
> Strained, maybe, by time's storms, but there no less.

There, you see, he has said it all himself.

A bookseller told me the other day that since Hardy's

death there had been a great call for his books; but only for two titles—*Tess,* and *Jude;* "the only two," he added, with the amiable indignation that every bookseller has toward sheeplike customers, "that they've heard of. I wish to gosh someone would come in and buy his Poems."

To sit down quietly, very quietly, to Hardy's Collected Poems is a strange experience. Perhaps you will try it some evening. Take first a long swallow of open air, and have something burning beside you, even if only a candle; fire is element and symbol of sheer life. Then set away every irrelevant mirth or perplexity: be for an hour or so as passively aware as a sprawling dog. Refresh yourself with his sense of earthly reality.

For Hardy's poems, full of "quaint vermiculations," are as close to life as this evening's newspaper. Indeed they are often quite tabloid in their emphasis on the morbid, the comic, the melodramatic. Once, in irreverent college days, I planned to write a little essay to be called A Census of Bastards in the Works of Thomas Hardy. It would have been very numerous. For in his heyday he dealt, in a way that merely genteel people can never understand, with cruel actualities of life.

But in his poems, even more than in his novels, you see the deep naïveté that was so firm a part of his strength. A smaller man would have hesitated to publish many of these doggerels (as he himself called some of them). But he saved them all carefully, and even in his latest years was still printing many of his juvenilia. For he felt, with good instinct, that they were part of his rich testimony to the grim human comedy. "Time's laugh-

ingstocks" was one of his favourite phrases: but who ever made merrier at Time's expense? To be publishing, at eighty-five, verses one wrote at twenty-five, is that not a brisk tweak for the phantom with the scythe?

Suppose you had never read any Hardy, had only vaguely heard of him as a dark brooder on chance and fate, a "pessimist." Wouldn't you then be surprised to find that he is also one of the most graceful and versatile of light rhymers, with a Dobsonian charm in airy measures, a master of what has been called vers de société? But so it is. Indeed much of his best verse is exactly that, vers de société, though it happens to be rustic society. There is an extraordinary loveliness in the plain candour of his singing, its monosyllabic words, its sweet frolicsome joy in all earth's revel. The great love and honour that men held for Hardy were due not only to the perfect dignity of his "whole symmetric history," but also I think to a queer feeling that all his readers share: here was not some mysterious incomprehensible genius, not (as he described Shakespeare) some strange bright foreign bird seen momently among the barnyard fowls; he was homogeneous to ourselves. Nothing is pleasanter than to take a few friends who have been mistaught that Hardy was always the brooder on the wrongs of Time, and read aloud to them some of his exquisite songs of love. Try for instance "Great Things," or "Timing Her."

Of the clarity of his quick observation you will find innumerable evidence: the girl's thumb against the spring of her parasol, swallows flying "like little crossbows," the sparrow "in his wheel-rut bath," "the sleepy fly

that rubs its hands." He had that passionate tenderness of eye that belongs mostly to grave and troubled men. And as much as any poet who ever lived he was singer and student of women. What an eye he had for them! Somewhere in his poems you will find a little verse about one who sees a girl on a railway platform as the train pulls out, and forever reproaches himself for not having obeyed his impulse to get out and speak to her. (He wrote a number of poems about railway trains, which were probably always a pleasurable adventure to him, as he travelled little. One of his friends tells us that he never talked over a telephone until he was over eighty.) Women, who are such reckless realists in secret, will always applaud his enthusiasm for essentials.

Now he who relished the grimly comic would not want us to be too dolorous in speaking of his poems. Time will make large deduction among them. But you will lose much pleasure if you only read him in selections. Evidently he was not critical of his own verse, and wanted us to have all his fierce and loving directory of common life. I should be sorry if you let any anthologist take away from you some of the queerer phases of his genius—the lady dancing in her nightgown because she has just heard that her husband is dead; the bride in satin slippers being driven to the madhouse; the little girl wondering why her mother dresses the dolls like soldiers; the husband dying of a cough who sees his wife already buying the fashionable mourning. (Hardy has no great tenderness for husbands, and either cornutates or kills them off as promptly as possible.) He was the satirist of Circum-

stance, but he liked to fabricate his circumstances pretty carefully and made a point of tilting his scale with a few fragments of broken Commandment. The poem about the Statue of Liberty (but not our one) is as amusing an example of this as you'll find. Or the village women quarrelling as to who shall decorate the grave where their numerous children have been buried "like sprats in a tin." But as a matter of fact the bodies have been moved, and beneath the mound is nothing but a drain-pipe. Sometimes one remembers that Hardy began as an architect, for sometimes his coincidences have been almost too methodically worked out to specification in blue print.

But it will be hard to have again, in this intricate time, another poet so calmly and beautifully remote from our world of skirmish and negotiation. Every thinking soul must, for its own necessity, defend some line of retreat into stars and simplicity. No man of our time kept open so nobly his communications with Silence. So I advise you only, before you sit down to read his poems, to grace yourself with quiet, with a smell of clean earth and sky, with a humble love of other human beings. This man explored the whole range of human anxiety: he began by writing "On the Use of Terra Cotta in Domestic Architecture" and went from there as high as the tremendous choruses of Years and Pities that end *The Dynasts*. His conclusion, he himself suggested once, was that even if man's consciousness was a mistake on God's part, at least it was a mistake we can bear, considering the unearned joys it brings us.

So a plain little gray man, very courteous, very

wrinkled, with eyes as bright and riddling as an owl's, has joined a great company. It was almost the first time he had consorted seriously with fashionable people, but they welcomed him, and were worthy of him.

ROMANY STAINS

THE LETTERS OF ABÉLARD AND HÉLOÏSE, now first translated from the Latin by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. London, 1925. 4to, buckram, gilt, uncut. Inside back cover and end fly-leaf brandy-stained, and label, "Vieux Cognac 1842," pasted on former.

THIS I find in the proceedings of a book sale held at the Anderson Galleries, and I pay tribute to the delicacy of the cataloguer's discrimination. This is a new refinement of bibliophily, that the connoisseur must not merely describe all the technical points of a rare edition, but be able to identify the nature and provenance of stains and foxings. I was always amused by the wine-spots on a waistcoat of George Washington's preserved in the State House, Philadelphia. Very likely the expert who catalogued *Abélard and Héloïse* could tell us the evact vintage of those long-faded maculations.

And the same day that I found that item in the auction catalogue I met by chance a man who told me that he had foolishly attempted to bring in three bottles of wine when he landed from an Atlantic liner the other day. He is a very honest and unselfish man, he had made no particular attempt to conceal the contraband—which, indeed (he is an author) he intended to give to some

publisher friends. But the inspector found it, and they made a public humiliation-scene. My friend was given a severe lecture, before a large grinning crowd of his fellow-passengers; he was heavily fined; and then, like a guilty schoolboy, ordered to carry the bottles to the edge of the pier and hurl them against the side of the ship. Which, in much misery, he did. It must have been a shocking scene, painful even to think about. I only allude to it because it is healthy, sometimes, to meditate anxious things.

I am not interested to argue whether or not Prohibition is a sagacious political experiment. Quite possibly it is: I cannot pretend to know. At any rate it removes the enjoyment of fine things from those too insensible or uncontriving to ensue them. But the pragmatics of the matter are irrelevant: I look about in my mind for a rationale. I can see many reasons why a government should prohibit. And the maxim *Abusus non tollit usum* may apply in reverse. But you can have no philosophy of the matter until you really know what has been prohibited. The god of pure wine has been crucified between two malefactors, hootch and gin. And much of their discredit has fallen on his divine head. As dear Henry Holt so shrewdly said, "The dinner party has been abolished by those who never saw one."

Wine is under suspicion, as beautiful things so often are. Like religion, love, laughter, any sort of explosive, it is an anxiety to officials. It cannot be tolerated unless under some hygienic pretence. Quite potable vintages are sold, legally and without scathe, because a grain or so

of pepsin added makes them, theoretically, a "tonic." Peruna, I have no doubt, rises higher in the alcoholic scale than some of the bottles my friend had to crash against the *Leviathan's* steel plates.

But wine is under suspicion because it is beautiful. It opens the heart, it warms the shy poet hidden in the cage of the ribs. It melts the wax in the ears that music may be heard. It takes the terror from the tongue, that truth can be said, or what rhymes marvellously with truth. The soft warm sting on the cheekbones that a ripe Burgundy gives is only the thin outward pervasion of a fine heat within, when the cruel secret smoulder of the wit leaps into clear flame: flame that consumes the sorry rubbish of precaution and cajolery. The mind is full of answers. And then, presently, if you have dealt justly with the god, not brutishly, he gives you the completest answer of all—sleep.

Wine is under suspicion because it is beautiful; because it is ineradicably woven into the triune mystery-man, woman and god. This is wild palaver, I hear someone say; but it is part of man's folly to have to bear testimony. The goblet, pure colour and form, adorably curved as woman herself, is this not fit calix for the miracle within? Or the shallow silver of the Burgundian tasting-cup with its curly snake carved for a handle. The eye of the adder notes you as you tilt the draught: to remind you that we are more than mere botanists. We pay quitrent in Eden yet, and honeysuckle and poison ivy grow gladly in the same clump.

Sage indeed are those who have him under suspicion,

the shining god of wine. For his magic treads close to dark giddiness and horror, the sickness of unanswerable things. But there is a moment in his ritual, his clean austere ritual, when the heart is pure as the chemist's adoring the atom, dreaming an easier world. Then, on this warm sandbeach beside the uncounted surf, Bacchus lights his fire. You thought it was a lonely bivouac, yet looking round in the dark there is firelight in other eyes. So if you shudder to have men unburden the packed excess of their souls, you are well advised to have stiffly drilled squads of inspectors on every pierhead of literature. Governments and good manners, tidy pyramids and proses, are not built of the great blocks of the Unsaid. Leave those to such quarrymen as William Blake and Walt Whitman. Keep Off the Leaves of Grass.

This is a dream, a foolishness, an absurdity. But I don't like to hear people talk of Amendments until they know what they've amended. I am thinking of a cellar I know in Burgundy. There, laid away in rows as carefully ranged as the lines of a poem, are the future gladnesses of men. There are names that I am selfish enough to enjoy rehearsing. Musigny, rich in bouquet and ether; Romanée-Conti, *d'une délicatesse*. Clos Vougeot, potent and velvety, Richebourg with exquisite power and aroma. Hospice de Beaune, strong but a thought acrid; Pommard that tingles the cheekbone; Pouilly, the perfect luncheon wine. Nuits St. Georges, bright and gracious; Chambertin, which seems to me just faintly metallic, bitterer than the soft Musigny. Meursault, which I rank below Pouilly; and adorable Chablis Moutonne, clear and

fine as the lizard's bell-note when he rings, like an elfin anvil, softly under the old stone steps in the mild French dusk.

So I could go on, but I leave it to you to verify my private amateurishness from your own researches. What I want to tell you is this. In the vaulted roof of that cellar, strangely swaying in the hot flicker of the candle you hold, are the crystallized skeletons of spiders. Some moist drip of limestone juices, oozing through long silent dampnesses of winter, has trickled down the threads of silk, embalmed these fragile creatures in their hammocks, turned them and their webs into gossamers of airy fossil. Perfect, pale, lovely as the most inconceivable daintiness of ivory filigree, they shiver in the tawny gust of candle-heat.

Isn't this just what happens in the darkest of all cellars where purple juice is stored? In the heart of man the wine-god does the same magic. The old spider of doubt, of anguish, of secret despair, is turned to pretty crystal. There, for a while anyhow, he hangs, a tiny brittle charm. An octagonal jewel, an epigram in silk and shell. At least that's part of what I was thinking when I came upon the conjunction of those three ghosts, Abélard, Héloïse, and Vieux Cognac.

THE BIRTH OF GOD

The scene is the interior of a stony cave which opens toward the back of the stage. I am no student of palæolithic life, but I imagine we might put the date of the episode somewhere about 50,000 B.C.

The characters are PRIMITIVE MAN *and just about equally* PRIMITIVE WOMAN. *There are also two primitive children: age and sex not specified. For the benefit of producers I always try to keep things as simple as possible. Almost any athletic commuter or member of a suburban woman's club will be able to play these strong protozoic rôles with but little rehearsal. For the purposes of the fable I have endowed the characters with a modest English vocabulary, but you must not imagine that I underrate their intelligence.*

I think I should add that the piece is not intended to be blasphemous; only a humble excursion into anthropology. And that it is not to be performed except by arrangement with the author.

A storm is raging outside the cave: wind, rain, thunder, lightning, the crash of breaking and falling branches. At one side of the cave, on a heap of dry leaves and boughs, the two children are sleeping under some furs. The amateur producer can represent these furs by one of those

large coonskin coats, such as can be borrowed from almost any family that has a boy at New Haven. This will give excellently that palæolithic effect.

PRIMITIVE WOMAN *is crouching terrified inside the cave. At each crescendo of the storm she cowers fearfully, goes to look protectively at her young, then gazes anxiously outward. After a specially loud crash she falls flat in abject fright.*

Enter PRIMITIVE MAN, *a tough hairy bird kilted in skins, sheltering himself as best he can from the gale. He is wet and haggard. She seizes him, runs her hands over him to see if he is safe, clings to him. He looks off at the storm fearfully.*

WOMAN: Frightened, frightened. Are you still strong? Not broken anywhere? I thought you were gone.

MAN [*frightened too, but a little encouraged by her greater weakness*]: I thought so too. Awful. The small ones?

WOMAN: They sleep.

[*Lightning and thunder.*]

Sky noise frightens me. Can't you stop it?

MAN [*raises hands in despair*]: Noise overhead, knocks down big trees.

[*More lightning and thunder.*]

WOMAN [*shudders*]: That brightness.

MAN: The Big Noise is angry. [*They cower. Then, gradually plucking up his courage:*] That brightness is terrible. But there is something in it that pleases me.

WOMAN: Say that here. Don't say it out there.

MAN: Sky has filled up the river. It spreads everywhere.

WOMAN: Could you find nothing for——? [*Gesture of eating.*]

MAN: No. All living things were hid for fear—save one other.

WOMAN [*makes a gesture of despair—you must remember that they are really very badly frightened; and then asks*]: One other?

MAN: I hunted with the Dark Woman.

WOMAN: With her? Why?

MAN: I met her by chance.

WOMAN: She has no cave of her own. It is not good.

MAN: The Big Noise broke a tree. It fell on her. She is quiet.

WOMAN: We could eat *her.*

MAN: I thought of that. She had good white meat.

WOMAN: More white than that? [*Shows her own skin where it is untanned beneath her fur garment. But he pays no heed.*]

MAN: She looked sad, bent by the tree. It made me unhappy. I came away. I think it is not good to eat friends.

WOMAN: We are cold, hungry, we——

[*Terrific lightning and thunder, and the crash of a tree falling outside. Both prostrate themselves.*]

MAN: If things go on like this, we're done for. Sky has lost his temper.

WOMAN: Oh, brightness came down like that. [*Makes zigzag gesture.*]

MAN: Look, look! Sky has killed the tree. [*Points off,*

where the rain has ceased.] Sky has stopped pouring water. But the tree, what's happened?

WOMAN: It makes a mist.

MAN: The Big Noise has grown a flower in it. See, it climbs.

WOMAN: It means to kill.

MAN: I must see it.

WOMAN: Don't go——

MAN: I must. [*Dashes off, returns in an instant holding a smouldering bit of dead wood. They look at it in amazement.*]

WOMAN: It is red on the end. [*Touches it, utters a cry of pain.*] It bit me! I'm afraid!

MAN: It is a piece of that brightness that came from Sky. It's warm. [*Blows on it.*]

WOMAN: It's alive! Look out!

MAN: I don't understand, but it makes me think—— [*Puts it down carefully on stone slab, broods over it.*]

WOMAN: Perhaps it needs food, like us—— [MAN *tentatively puts a dead leaf to it, which bursts into flame.*]

MAN: Look! It is like the great heat in the sky.

WOMAN [*apprehensively*]: Be careful. Perhaps it is an enemy. It killed the tree.

MAN: It killed the Dark Woman.

WOMAN: It has great power.

MAN: It seems tame. [*But feeding it dry leaves and twigs he gets his fingers scorched and draws back in alarm.*]

WOMAN [*looking off, where the storm has ceased*]: Sky has forgotten his rage.

MAN: It was this that saved us. It is part of the Sky Danger.

WOMAN: There are too many dangers. I only want food and sleep—and kindness. [*She clings to him, vaguely frightened.*] Danger is cruel to us.

MAN: We were kind to Little Danger, we brought him in and fed him. [*Slowly, thinking this out.*] Perhaps he told Big Danger——

WOMAN: Big Danger was pleased——

MAN: And told Sky, and Sky found his temper!

WOMAN: But if Little Danger spreads he will bite us all.

MAN: I have an idea. [*Gets an earthenware bowl, carefully puts in it the smouldering wood and twigs.*] We'll put him in a place of honour.

WOMAN: Here, where he won't bite the small ones—[*Indicates large stone with a flat top at side of the cave.*]

MAN: Good! Now if we are polite to him perhaps he will tell his Father in Sky. [*Puts bowl on the stone.*] See, he's sending messages already. [*Points to ascending smoke.*]

WOMAN: I'm frightened. It will be so different. Will he always be there, watching us?

MAN: We must be careful. Speak to him in a very special way.

WOMAN: Give him dry leaves, they make him shine.

[*They do so, and the little fire burns in the bowl.*]

MAN: It's queer—I'll have to think about this—I have a feeling it would be good luck to give him something we like very much.

[*They look at each other in perplexity. Then the* WOMAN *goes to one side of the cave and fetches a half-gnawed bone.*]

WOMAN: I was saving this for you.

MAN [*examines the bone, reluctant to surrender it*]: Isn't there anything else?—Oh, very well. [*Puts bone respectfully in the bowl*].

WOMAN: I don't know how to say it, but I feel different already.

MAN: So do I.

[*Almost without knowing what they are doing, they find themselves making a tentative, shy, awkward bow toward the stone and the bowl.*]

We'll make up words for him that will please him.

[*The children wake.*]

1ST CHILD: I'm hungry.

WOMAN: There, the storm's over, Daddy'll be able to find food for us now.

2D CHILD [*seeing the smoking bowl*]: What's that?

1ST CHILD: Look, something new! [*They rush across.*]

2D CHILD: I want it!

1ST CHILD: It's for me.

MAN: Stop! Don't go near it.

WOMAN: Children, you mustn't touch it, it's magic.

MAN: The most wonderful thing has happened.

1ST CHILD: What's magic?

2D CHILD: Where'd you get it?

MAN: It came from Sky. The Big Noise sent it to save us.

WOMAN: It brought good luck. It killed the Dark Woman.

MAN: It ended the storm.

WOMAN: It knows everything. If you're good, it'll take care of you.

MAN: If you do anything wrong, it'll be angry.

1ST CHILD: Daddy, how could we do anything wrong?

2D CHILD: There isn't anything wrong to do.

WOMAN: Even the stone is magic. Don't touch it.

1ST CHILD: But that's just the old rock we used to crack nuts on.

MAN [*horrified*]: Ssssh! Do like this when you go near it.

[*He crouches before the stone, and the others imitate him.*]

2D CHILD [*delighted*]: It's a new game!

WOMAN: Say something so it won't be angry.

MAN [*uttering what the anthropologist will recognize as humanity's first and sincerest prayer*]: Little Danger . . . be kind to us . . . kill all our enemies . . . and don't send the Big Noise to frighten us . . . give us enough to eat . . . tell your Father in Sky we need all the help we can get.

[*Black stage. A curtain descends in front, shutting off the whole cave scene. The lights come on again immediately, this curtain is painted to represent a small cross-section of a church interior, with stained-glass windows above and small sections of three pews seen*

end-on. A lady and two children enter from the L. and take these three seats, behind one another. The lady kneels devoutly, meanwhile the children behind her giggle and scuffle together. She turns to reprove them.]

WOMAN [*in a strong whisper*]: I'm ashamed of you both. Don't you know how to behave in church? Church is different from other places.

1ST CHILD: Mother, he stuck a pin in me, right——

2D CHILD: Well, tell her what *you* did.

WOMAN: God can see what you're doing.

1ST CHILD: I hope He saw him stick a pin in me.

WOMAN: He knows everything, and if you're good he'll—— Ssssshh, here's the minister.

[PRIMITIVE MAN *enters R. He has had time to slip on a surplice over his palæolithic garb and make the necessary improvements in his tenue. He reads with the proper solemnity.*]

MAN: O God the Father, of heaven: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

[*The others repeat it, mumbling, after him.*]

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

[*The others repeat it.*]

O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

[*They repeat it.*]

From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death.

ALL: Good Lord, deliver us.

MAN: O God, Heavenly Father, whose gift it is, that the rain doth fall, the earth is fruitful, beasts increase, and fishes do multiply; Behold, we beseech thee, the afflictions of thy people; and grant that the scarcity and dearth, which we do now most justly suffer for our iniquity, may through thy goodness be mercifully turned into cheapness and plenty; for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

MAN: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. . . .

[*As he intones these words, the curtain slowly falls.*]

BOOKSELLER'S PROGRESS

IT WAS felt that authors and booksellers do not know enough of one another's anxieties. Incurably inquisitive about all phases of the Book Business (aiblins the most hilarious traffic ever devised by man) I joined up with a friend who is a publisher's salesman. I wanted to know more about the arts, sometimes black and sometimes merely a delicate crepuscule, by which books are sold. We went travelling together. We called on the Trade; or better still, as the brave lingo has it, we Visited With Some Big Accounts.

In no other business, I suppose, is so much done by the manufacturer to divert the retailer's mind from his sorrows. With a thousand pretty arts the publisher, gifted Prospero, summons his Ariels and Mirandas to soothe the dangerous breasts of the Caliban booksellers. He sends out his authors like shock troops or like dancing bears. They show moving pictures, they lecture to ladies' clubs, they autograph books, they play the guitar. But rarely enough do the authors make much attempt to find out what the bookseller himself thinks of all this. The bookseller, I may as well report it, is a good deal of a realist. He enjoys these junkets as much as anyone. But there is a famous anecdote in the Trade that has always pleased me. "Let me know the next time you're going to be in New York," said a publisher to a bookseller, "and

I'll take you duck shooting." "I don't want duck shooting," replied the other, "I want discounts."

Our little escapade was unusual in several respects. We were not selling anything and we were not Taking Orders. That in itself was quaint enough. To see my friend S. M., trained all his life as an expert salesman, deliberately and honourably refraining from trying to vend anything, was to see a human spirit in a state of beautifully tensile austerity. But we had no purpose except to study the mind of the bookseller and find out what he is thinking about. And I myself, for reasons of my own, had special desire to get some notion of the personal relations between the bookseller and the Boys on the Road. So we prowled in stockrooms, learning what titles the store was "stuck" with, we lunched and dined with booksellers hearing their anecdotes (which I will not print) of Great Figures in the Trade, we spent evenings with the clerks of book departments in huge department stores, we hobnobbed with travellers from other houses and eased them to bed late at night. We sat up long hours in Pullman cars discussing the joyous humours of this merry industry. Even the publishers themselves, who bide at home in their offices, know little, I believe, of the varied intuitions and endurances necessary in their salesmen. It would not do to tell them. It will never do to tell the Inside Stuff in any department of life. Not because it is scandalous, but because it requires so generous and full an understanding of human nature.

So before any anatomizing of the bookseller's charms, which may come later, let me pay a small tribute to that

unpublished figure in our amusing trade, the salesman himself. He is, to me, the very salt of this incorrigible earth. I have watched and admired him these thirteen years. Not even his difficult job has wholly robbed him of reverence for fine things. But he is wise, wise with something of the shrewd and cruel wisdom of Bacon or Montaigne. He knows that to go to the bookseller (except the very sparse few) with any talk of Literary Value, is disaster itself. Literature may be mentioned, late at night, when truth, like the boreal aurora, flickers marvellously in the sky; but only as between friends. During daylight both Salesman and Buyer are on guard against any such irrelevancies. Do you think the less of them for that? Not I. How often do clergymen, in their casual meetings with one another, talk about God? The happiest compliment paid us in our progress was in the voice of a famous Middle Western bookseller whom we called on to hale forth for symposium. Delightful fellow, alert and quick and keen, he looked at us with his witty brown eyes. There were four of us at the moment: three connected in one way or another with the book business, another a philosophical columnist whose air of charmed melancholy is a deceptive charcoal smudge over his clear ember of mirth. Our guest took one glimpse and turned to his assistant. "Judging by the looks of this gang," he said, "I guess I won't be back this afternoon." He was right. He wasn't.

My friend S. M. (which stands for Sales Manager) is a delightful bird to travel with. If I were to tell you how fruitful, how humane, how educative in every sense

were those ten days spent with him On the Road, you would think I exaggerated. There are few poets or novelists, crank and uneasy folk, with whom I should venture so prolonged and arduous an intimacy. The salesman is the man for me. His wide and curious experience of life, his genius for perceiving and relishing other people's quirks and humours, his experienced demeanour among hotel porters and ticket agents and the mysterious aristocrats called Bell Captains, these are an opening to the parochial mind. His exquisite care of his clothes, his wardrobe trunk, his well-trimmed hair, his burnished finger nails, his lotion after shaving, offer a mere author new vistas into the excitement of life. His endless humour, his patience, his punctuality of judgment, his charitable wisdom in those gossips late at night . . . nor would it be unfair to say that the voyage was perhaps to him also fruitful in new experience. There is before me a much thumbed timetable of trains from Pittsburgh to Chicago. We found, on a wet autumn morning, that the only train we could catch was a local, made up mostly of baggage cars, with only two passenger coaches and no Pullmans at all. This was a shock to him. I have not yet been able to persuade any of his business associates that S. M. travelled with me fourteen hours in the daycoach smoker of a local train. Indeed, now that it is all over, he hardly believes it himself. But here is the little timetable, limp with handling where we pored over it, checked off the innumerable stoppings and the miles still to go. It was a happy day, too, and we weren't bored for a moment. The ham sandwich at Alliance, Ohio, the roast beef sandwich

at Fort Wayne, Indiana, which were our sustenance that long journey, were a revelation to him of how authors travel. He has a digestion sensitive to psychic doings, and he tossed off a swig of milk of magnesia from time to time and looked anxiously at his Knox Twenty which was gathering dust on the rack. But we sat there, watching the lovely fulvous prairies of Ohio and Indiana, ticking off regardless towns on our chart. New Galilee, East Palestine, Maximo, Crestline, Bucyrus, Dola, Delphos, Middlepoint, Etna Green, Bourbon, Hamlet, Valparaiso—what subjects for discussion and surmise all these names roused. That forward starboard corner of the smoker became an old and familiar home.

But I mustn't dream of telling you the poetry of our journey. I will try to mutilate the narrative, rub down and trim. I shan't tell you of the times I woke him in middle darkness, to sit on the edge of his bed and expound some new aspects of the ineffable, and he was not even annoyed. He patiently consulted his watch, listened gravely with appropriate comments, took a little milk of magnesia, and said eventually, "Well, Oldtimer, you'd better get some sleep."

So we had, as O. Henry's deathless joke remarks, days of Damon and nights of Pythias. I am not a good sleeper on the road. New adventure agitates me too much; but he, more experienced, evaporates deep and serene. He does not snore, he has just a soft tranquil exhalation which I sometimes lay awake to ponder. There was even a symbolic virtue in that overheard calm breathing. It was the equable voice of the Book Trade, touched with the faint

anguish of all mortality and yet reclining hopefully on the bosom of this jocund planet which bears us all, Bell Captains and bishops and book salesmen, with impartial unconcern. Yes, in that peaceful whisper, untouched by whatever merciless imaginings keep authors awake in strange hotels, I seemed to hear the good piety of the undaunted pilgrim. I heard the secret humorous conscience of the Boys on the Road, those gay and valiant children of our queer trade. Perhaps Joe Estabrook or McGhee (in Pittsburgh, these) didn't come through with the order hoped-for; and New York has been telegraphing that you Must Get Quantity. Never mind, to-morrow there'll be Marcella Hahner or Sid Avery or Kroch, to tackle in Chicago. Or Grace Thompson in Indianapolis or Walter McKee in Detroit, and all the others, shrewd buyers and amusing friends. And he knows, the experienced fowl, just how to tackle them. It is a joyous thing, a lusty human vibration, to see Buyer and Seller meet on their own ground of artistry, a happy pair who know one another well and whose interests, behind all the skill of manœuvre, are really identical. What is that wise old French saying, so valid of all human relations—"Nothing equals the joy of the drinker, except the joy of the wine in being drunk." That is true of the Salesman and the Sold. I remember S. M. giving me a vivid little paradigm of how a certain buyer has to be encountered. "You have to be half gorilla and half Casanova," he said, "to handle that bird." He illustrated with gorgeously forcible anecdote. "That," he concluded, "is the way he *likes* to be sold."

GRUB STREET RUNNERS

EVERY era produces its specialized types: and this latest lustrum, one of enormous hilarity in the publishing business, has given new angles and colours to that delightful person, the Publisher's Young Man.

I don't think much has ever been said about him. Discretion in his *sine qua non,* and he has been dipped so deeply in the dragon's blood of printer's ink that his secrecy is almost one hundred proof. Yet, like Siegfried or Achilles, there is one vulnerable spot. It is the lunch hour. In that brief vacuum—not always so brief, perhaps —when the darksome back rooms of incognito restaurants mingle a premature romance of evening with the candour and energy of midday, sometimes he tells his tales. For that is part of the topsyturving our inverted age has brought about: lunches nowadays are lit and liquored with the tones and fluids proper only to dusk.

In the old days—I mean about the time of Halley's Comet—there were Publishers' Readers. They were young Harvard men, mostly, and often, if possible, they grew beards. They led a mild, cheery, tepidly intellectual existence, with a rolltop desk and a filing case and aiblins a framed autographed menu card of a Hasty Pudding Club dinner at which Tom Aldrich had been guest. If matters became confidential they would show

you their first editions of Swinburne, and (growing reckless) lament the meagre appreciation of George Gissing. They had a hale and solemn respect for Authors, and did not dream of becoming intimate with them.

I maintain that it was Harry Steger who was the first of the modern rout of Publishers' Young Men. Harry—dead since 1913—is well remembered still. He was the first of the Grub Street Runners. He was before his time. But even he, a strong Elizabethan blade, could not survive the tumult of that way of life. Perhaps I exaggerate Harry's importance in the secret history of publishing, because he was the first Grub Street Runner I ever met.

I am not going to tell any of the genial inside merriments of the Publishers' Young Men. I was one myself for a little while, and I know too well how important is their privacy. And now there is even a new shoal of them —the Young Publishers' Young Men, whose life is difficult enough already; pure liquor is scarce to find, and suppose, in the course of gruntling an important Author you happen to poison him? I only wish, conscientious student of Sociology, to point out the existence of the type and its charming humours.

The Grub Street Runner is young, a trifle peaked, and to a great extent has succeeded in "eliminating the nocturnal stupor" as some jovial Saturday Reviewer said in alluding to the unimportance of sleep. Sometimes he has a little darkness under his eyes: it is an inevitable transpiration from the assorted secrecies which crowd him within. When I say he is young, I mean he is shortly under thirty at the moment when ripest for observation. For at

thirty or thereabouts he either dies suddenly, of an excess of dinners of Poetry Societies, Authors' Leagues and American Penwomen; or he marries and begins to read Montaigne, whom he has heard referred to so often in the course of a thousand literary evenings. He and his wife take a colonial cottage somewhere up toward Westport, full of pewter and framed woodcuts, and he has time to slice the pages of his Bruce Rogers editions.

It is a jocund life while it lasts; indeed it is better than that, it is a life warmly packed with fine enthusiasms and generous hilarities which have their valuable effect upon the literature of his time. Genuine lover of all things fine and sensitive, he must also school himself to meet and mollify, without disillusion, the various tribe of authors and artists. The publishing business is so miscellaneous nowadays, the Grub Street Runner must be flexible. He must be scholar among scholars and rake among rakes. In the authors he has to gruntle he must draw no line of race, colour, age, or previous condition of pulchritude. Connoisseur of honest writing, he must not himself be tainted by any hankering to write. That is fatal. Connoisseur of strong drinking, he must not himself drink too deep; for it is he who is expected to get the Authors home safe. After the last visiting novelist has been safely taxied to his (or her) hotel, see the Grub Street Runner, dubiously reconsidering the items of his expense account, frugally walking back toward Gramercy Park or Washington Mews. He has heard the chimes ring three on the Metropolitan Tower more often than you'd think. Or the last Long Island train: he can tell

you, by rote, what time the ultimate vehicle leaves on any of those branches—the Port Washington, the Oyster Bay, the Freeport, the Garden City.

Competition, I suppose, has had something to do with the increased pressure of his life. There are more publishers than ever before; and a greater appetite among authors to be amused. A Grub Street Runner told me, shining with joy, of a great triumph: he had succeeded in adding to the list of his firm's clients an author who looked like a smiling success and yet neither caroused nor danced. This was a great relief to him. In a life where at almost any moment he must be prepared to throw a party for any of the town's reigning bluestockings, to drink, dance, play guessing games, and discuss royalties and advertising appropriation in between times, the thought of a new writer who looked like a mid-Victorian gentlewoman filled him with rare joy. For the first time he thought seriously of marrying an Author. Among the Grub Street Runners it is rare.

Tact, of course, is his radiant virtue. He must match his wits against all sorts of extremists—explorers, dramatists, people who have a Great Idea (such as writing a Textbook on How to Write Textbooks on Writing Short Stories), Poets Who Don't Believe in Punctuation, columnists, psychoanalysts, and ladies who decide, on insufficient provocation, to exert their personal charm. He is confidant of all sorts of outrageous humours, is the buffer among conflicting jealousies, and must know a good laboratory where gin can be analyzed.

All this, I hear you muttering, is a vulgar and picayune

attitude. No, I don't think so. I love the Grub Street Runner, I know him in many incarnations. Associate constantly with madmen, he cannot himself afford to be mad. At his finest he is a sort of young Santayana: disenchanted in little that he may still be enchanted in much. More than most men, more than almost any of the reputed scholars and high critics, he sees life transforming its unruly, disorderly, comic, and dangerous flux into the divinely witty patterns of art. He is a student of temperament. Alert, humane, generous, unshockable, he circulates constantly in that strangest of worlds, the world of artistic travail. It is he who is the writer's consoler while the damned thing is being written; to him come the letters of despair and the telegrams asking for advance royalty. It is he who knows, if anyone does, how frail and perilous are the threads on which good work depends. He has a sense of pity. Perhaps that is why he looks older than he is.

THE HOLE IN THE STOCKING

"WELL, then," said the Christmas fairies, making up their lists, "What would you give to an author who is writing a book?"

"The Gift of Solitude," said one; "that among the humorous multitudes of men he may pass unknown and unsuspected; I mean unsuspected even by his best friends who shall never guess the loving judgments of his heart. The man who is unknown can never be interrupted, except occasionally by his better demon."

"You are too cryptic," cried a volatile fairy, tossing her tiny package into the stocking. "I give him the gift of Folly: that he may always behave worse than himself and know himself an ass. He must know himself incapable of dealing with this shrewd perplexing world; outwitted on every hand, always in the wrong; this will give him those midnight sweats and horrors that are such good laxatives; it will give him humility, and adoration for those greater than himself, so that he will fall on his knees where no one sees him but never in public. Yes, I give him the golden seed of Folly and pray he may be wise enough to cherish it."

"It's a fairy's duty to be cryptic," suggested a third. "I give him the gift of Grace: that, being (as you have made him) a fool, he may yet mock other fools without

unbearable offence, showing by the tone of his mockery that he includes himself in the discipline. Without Grace he is nought but a clown driving his pate on stone walls; he must have the gift of elusive words that change colour while you look at them; he must walk a mile for a chameleon."

"The gift of Disregard," announced a stern-looking fairy whose coat was buttoned up to his chin. "He must learn to pay no attention to what anyone says, not to be abashed by praise nor puffed up by attack; these are the great faults of authors. Certainly he must never subscribe to a clipping bureau."

"The gift of Patience," said another, putting in a queer-shaped parcel. "It looks a good deal like laziness, and will often be so considered. But it means that he must let his work take its own time, never be hurried by landlords or editors, be not too depressed if it does not seem to spread and sparkle on the page as it should, be content to let it ferment and work inwardly until the time has come. This is a sharp-edged gift and will not always be relished by our friend."

"You are too darned solemn," interrupted a young fairy with an Eton cut and so debonair a mien that even among fairies she was held to be a bit irresponsible. "For goodness' sake, give the poor fish something he can cash in on; give him Mirth; the kind of laughter that started from a star so distant that it hasn't reached us yet; let him be inventive in laughter as scientists are in physics; golly, there must be all sorts of undiscovered merriments; I think it's terrible to be still laughing at the same jokes

that Chaucer started; give him the gift of the Absurd."

"Cash in on?" exclaimed a disillusioned-looking sprite. "Child, what leads you to think that a new kind of Mirth would be profitable? Give him Self-Forgetfulness, that he may enjoy the world with reverence and peace, and blot out for a while from his busy mind that hellish awareness of himself. Let him have room in his heart to pity others and lie hidden in a dream."

They fell to wrangling as to which of their various gifts would be most valuable to their beneficiary.

"These are all very intangible presents," said one. "I'd give him a sagacious publisher and leave the rest to luck, mice, and oblivion."

"Besides," remarked an observant fairy, "there's a big hole in the toe of his stocking, most of these little packages of ours will slip right through it."

"We'd better mend it," said a domestic-minded fairy, getting out her sewing bag.

"Yes, it ought to be mended, that's his particular weakness, his——"

"Gracious!" said Santa, coming down the chimney with a crash. "Don't mend that! If it weren't for that the poor devil would never write at all."

ANNA FAURE AND THE PARROT

EDMUND PEARSON begins his excellent book *Five Murders* (one of the first publications of the Crime Club) with the case of Frederick Small, "The Man Who Was Too Clever." The too-cleverness of Mr. Small consisted in an attempt to cash a $20,000 insurance policy by making it seem that his wife (his third wife, to be exact) had perished in a fire that destroyed their cottage on Lake Ossipee in September, 1916. The truth, as Mr. Pearson narrates in his own caustic way, was that Mr. Small, in spite of his carefully fabricated alibi at room 113 in Young's Hotel, Boston, had assassinated Mrs. Small before he left home that afternoon, and contrived to start the fire some hours later by a time clock and an ingenious arrangement of dry batteries. Mr. Small paid the penalty for his crime more than ten years ago, but I felt a queer sort of intimacy when I saw that the drawing of him in the courtroom, reprinted by Mr. Pearson, was done by my friend Haydon Jones, once cartoonist of the *Evening Post*. For Mr. Jones used to amuse himself in his spare time by making etchings of even so unmurderous people as his colleagues on that ancient newspaper.

But any rousing crime story always takes me back to

my favourite Bataille: *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines.* Alas that most of Bataille is certainly of too strong a flavour for the public stomach of the Crime Club. But there is one little story in Bataille, also an insurance fraud, of which I was immediately reminded. It also deals with a $20,000 policy and an idyllic rural retreat; it has not the ingenious phases of the Small case; but there are aspects of it that seem to me picturesque. M. Bataille calls it the story of the Young Girl and the Parrot, and we may as well stick to his title.

We spoke about Mademoiselle de Sombreuil and her trip to Marseilles. When she was in that city she may well have ridden in a trolley car; and it is even possible that if so, the conductor of the trolley car may have been a certain Etienne Cournou. I'm sorry that he was only the conductor, not the "wattman," which always seems to me such a delicious French term for the motorman. But at any rate he was rather a shady person, had held various kinds of jobs, and was so little trusted by those who knew him best that when his wife lay dying she would accept no medicine from his hands, fearing to be poisoned. His conduct at the time of his wife's funeral was not marked by delicacy: he and a high-spirited female whom we know only as "la femme Clémencet" walked together in the procession with so cheery a mien that it caused some scandal. The Clémencet person had the hardihood (so at any rate the prosecution construed it) to lay a wreath on the poor woman's coffin; and the ceremony was interrupted by the undertaker's insistence on being paid; which was done by taking up a collection among those present.

Yet it appears that this ruffian Cournou had his own notions of propriety, for the day after the funeral he ejected his mother-in-law from his premises. "Je ne voulais pas être accusé d'être son amant, en vivant seul avec elle."

The Clémencet person was now Cournou's mistress. I suspect her of having been a creature of schemes and ambitions. She had a friend, some say rather more than a friend, M. Ardisson, a grain dealer, who seems to have been a simpleton with available cash. The days of trolley-conducting were now over, Cournou and Clémencet concocted more grandiose plans. Cournou was a plausible scoundrel, and managed to wangle money out of Ardisson with arguments whose purport will appear later. In the month of March, 1891, we find him visiting an employment agency anxious to hire a servant. His requirements deserve scrutiny. He must have "a young girl from 22 to 25 years of age, of attractive physique, well raised, discreet, gentle and mannerly, and knowing no one in Marseilles." Nor would he leave his name and address at the office. Madame Negré, the head of the employment bureau, was evidently not over scrupulous. Several likely young women were rejected by Cournou because they had friends in the city. They were lucky.

Enters then our heroine, the unfortunate Anna Faure. She had just come down from the country to find a job; by some evil chance she enrolled with Madame Negré. Cournou saw her and was delighted. She accepted a job at 35 francs a month.

She must have been heartily astonished at her first experience as a domestic in the big city. Cournou and

Clémencet installed her in their apartment, and instead of having any work to do she found herself put through a sort of beauty course. She was given a blue silk kimono (or perhaps even two kimonos, for it is referred to in the testimony sometimes as blue and sometimes as pink). Her hair was rearranged in the urban mode; Clémencet, an expert in all such matters, taught her to pencil her eyebrows and even to take a bath. Anna's buxom country rondures were slenderized by gymnastics and special diet, and the kind of underwear they gave her might well have caused her delicious pangs of apprehension. But the purpose of all this (done at Ardisson's expense) was not at all what you might have supposed.

There are many reasons why I should like to visit Marseilles; and if I ever get there I want to explore a suburban region called the Valley of Oriol. While his mistress was drilling and perfuming the astounded Anna, Cournou was house-hunting in the suburbs. Well provided with the grain dealer's money, he found no difficulty in renting the picturesque Villa Rosa. It is not hard to imagine it as it may have been in those sirupy airs of Mediterranean April. A modest plaster or stucco cottage, I suppose, and behind it a walled garden of flowers and shrubbery. There were pebble walks in that cheerful garden, and a shallow stone pool surrounded by rose bushes. What the simple-minded Anna may have thought about such luxury we can only conjecture, for there is no testimony remaining on this earth, I suppose, as to any of her ideas. Already sufficiently astonished by the easy

life she found herself leading, the Villa Rosa was only one more miracle. Shortly before they moved to the villa, a gentleman had called to see her at the apartment of her benefactors; Clémencet had seen to it that the girl was looking her best; the rose-coloured peignoir and the other toilet accessories had been in requisition; Anna was carefully coached in deportment. She was introduced as a young kinswoman of the house of Cournou, and there were documents involved. Whether Anna had to sign them herself I don't know; if so, she probably had little notion what they were all about. Perhaps, as a reader of such feuilletons as were available for French country girls in 1891, she may even have imagined a romance and a betrothal contract.

At any rate, on the 15th of April they occupied the Villa Rosa. In so small a household—only Monsieur, Madame, and Madame's little girl—the domestic tasks were light. Madame and Anna shared them together, but Anna's status was that of a member of the family. The neighbours took it for granted that she was Monsieur's mistress, and Clémencet a duenna of sorts. There was plenty of time for strolling in the garden, for playing with the child, for thinking how superior all this was to the life of a village in the Drôme, her native department. And if the burly Cournou, with his upward curled moustaches and his rather savage air, seemed a trifle ominous after some of his excursions to town on business, the bright air of Oriole Valley soon restored him. Tramway conducting was never alluded to: Cournou was now the suburban gentleman. He wore gray check trousers and

a white waistcoat, he drank his wine sitting comfortably in shirtsleeves on the pebbled *terrasse,* and was observed to be specially pleased with the ornamental pool and the rose bushes.

There was another member of the ménage whom I have forgotten to mention, who was also much pleased with the garden. This was M. Cournou's parrot, who was so exhilarated by the move to the country that when her cage was cleaned (she is explicitly alluded to as a female parrot) she several times flitted out into the shrubbery and had to be recaptured. Perhaps the parrot was the most important of the whole household: if it had not been for her perhaps neither M. Bataille nor ourselves would ever have heard of the Villa Rosa.

On the morning of the 6th of May M. Chabrol, an officer of the Marseilles police, was hastily summoned to the Villa Rosa. There M. Cournou, in great agitation, explained the tragic thing that had happened. Madame had left the house about half-past eight to take her child to school. He himself had gone out for a stroll—to taste the morning air, one supposes. Returning, so he said, about nine, he had found the door locked, rang the bell without result; finally borrowed a ladder from a neighbour and scaled the garden wall. There a sad sight greeted him. Anna Faure was lying dead in the little pool, and beside her floated the draggled corpse of the pet parrot. The tragedy, according to Cournou, was not hard to reconstruct. Anna had been cleaning the bird-cage. The parrot had flown out and got into the rose bushes. Chasing it, Anna must have clutched the bird, stumbled on the edge

of the basin, and fallen in. There was only eighteen inches of water in the pool, but apparently, in falling, the girl had struck her head against the stone coping and stunned herself. There was indeed, as Chabrol immediately saw, a gruesome contusion at the back of her head. But the doctor, who was immediately called, saw no reason to disbelieve the facts as stated, and certified the death by accidental drowning.

M. Chabrol, for whom one conceives an immediate admiration, was not quite easy in his mind. The rim of the pool was perfectly flat and offered no occasion of stumbling. He noticed too a scratch on Cournou's right hand. He consulted another doctor, and had a second autopsy performed. Again the professional opinion was that the death was an accident. But still Chabrol was not satisfied. If he could not get convincing testimony from the body of poor Anna, there was still another corpse available, and one less hedged about by legal sanctities. He returned to Oriole Valley and took charge of the body of the parrot. With this he went to the Medical College and had an examination made. The authorities stated flatly that the bird had not died of drowning. It had been strangled first and then thrown into the water. Anna Faure's body was post mortem'd yet again, and this time the decision was reversed. The highest medical authority in Marseilles testified that death was due to the blow on the back of the head. Cournou was arrested on the charge of murder; and immediately the agent of the *La France* insurance company came forward. Cournou had insured the girl's life, only a few weeks previously, for the

sum of 100,000 francs; and M. Ardisson was the beneficiary of the policy.

The trial was a sordid spectacle: each of the three attempting to throw all the blame on the others. There seems no reasonable doubt, however, that Ardisson was guiltless of any share in the girl's death. He admitted having furnished the funds for the whole affair: Cournou had convinced him that the policy on Anna Faure's life could be resold "to an English company" for something like 40,000 francs. That there was at one time some such gambling traffic in insurances I believe is true. Clémencet's only defence was that she was terrorized by Cournou, who threatened to kill her child if she did not assist his schemes. The testimony reprinted by Bataille is adequate to reconstruct without much doubt what happened in the garden of the Villa Rosa that May morning.

Anna was sent out after *petit déjeuner* to do some household errands. Clémencet started the little girl toward school and hurried back. When Anna returned, Cournou was apparently in sportive mood. As usual, he was loitering about his favourite spot, the rose pool. He had a long piece of string, with which he proposed to measure the exact dimensions of the basin. They made quite a little game out of it. According to Clémencet, Cournou was particularly merry, chased Anna flirtatiously round the pool, and insisted on putting roses in her hair. Cournou denied this, as indeed he denied everything. "Moi, l'embrasser!" he cried. "Mais la femme Clémencet était jalouse comme une tigresse!" At any rate, there were

roses in poor Anna's hair when her body was found lying in the water.

One can imagine the parrot, from her cage in the portico, watching this grim byplay with the dark pessimistic eye of her kind. Finally, seeming to resume his serious intention—Allons! assez de folie!—Cournou gave one end of his measuring string to Clémencet and the other to Anna. They stretched it in diameter across the pool. On the pretext of adjusting it accurately Cournou came behind the girl as she knelt on the stone rim. With one hideous blow at the back of her head he stunned her, and pushed the body into the water. It is an oddity of Bataille's résumé that apparently the weapon was not identified. The president of the court says it must have been a stick or a stone, but on this capital point as to the instrument itself and what became of it, the record remains uncertain. That, I think, is the only feature in Cournou's favour.

But the scene was even more gruesome than this brief sketch implies. For Anna had some sudden twinge of horror as she knelt holding the string. Perhaps, mirrored in the clear water of the tiny pool, she saw something strange in the face of Clémencet who knelt opposite her a few feet away. Perhaps Cournou hesitated an instant before aiming the blow. Perhaps, as a romanticist would like to imagine, the parrot uttered some foreboding squawk. Anna turned suddenly, saw the murderous figure behind her, and sprang to grapple with it. She had time to cry "Je vais t'égratigner, et la justice te reconnaîtra." *(I'll scratch you, and they'll know who did it.)* Those

were her last words, and they were perfectly true. It was the scratch on Cournou's hand that first roused M. Chabrol's suspicions.

So Anna lay in the pool, with the rosebuds still in her hair. The movements of the murderous couple were now not devoid of cunning. Cournou seized the parrot, strangled it, and threw it into the water beside the body. He disposed of the string, and the weapon—whatever it was. Clémencet hastened off to town to leave Anna's pink peignoir at Ardisson's apartment, with some vague notion of implicating him. Cournou left the house for a stroll, to establish a good alibi. In the course of this ramble he met one Giovanni Mogli, a labourer, to whom he chatted about the pleasure of living in Oriole Valley in this heavenly spring weather. But something Giovanni said troubled him. "Yes," said Giovanni, "I saw you folks in your garden this morning. You have a good time there." This remark troubled Cournou so much that he treated Giovanni to a glass of brandy in the hope of finding out whether anything lay behind it. Presently, as we narrated last week, Cournou made his way back to the Villa Rosa. He rang the bell, registered surprise because no one answered, made a great to-do about borrowing a neighbour's ladder, and entered over the garden wall.

It is only fair to remark that at no time during the trial did Cournou admit any shade of guilt. To all Clémencet's confession he retorted fiercely "C'est du roman." He sat, scratching his head as though in profound perplexity, rummaging in a pile of papers. Twice he made a desperate and apparently random attempt to divert the

evident course of the affair. The first time he suddenly burst out that the hour had come to tell the truth, and that if the judge would grant him half an hour's private interview he would "mettre à nu" the mystery of Oriole Valley. There *was* a crime committed, he said, but not by him. The judge insisted that the courtroom was the place to tell whatever he wanted to say; whereupon Cournou, evidently searching for some plausible story, blurted out that Clémencet had done the murder, aided by two mysterious men whom he had seen talking to her the evening before. One was dressed in black, the other in gray; one was called Henry. I'm afraid that Cournou had not made a good impression on the courtroom, for this statement was greeted with laughter, and Clémencet replied "Vous êtes un menteur et un lâche."

I suppose that when his mistress no longer tutoyer'd him, Cournou began to feel that things were serious. He caused a second diversion by insisting that he had hidden two letters behind a mirror in the bedroom, letters which would prove the truth of his statement about Clémencet and the mysterious Messrs. Black and Gray. The Villa was searched, but of course no letters were found.

According to the rather dreadful French custom, the actual skull of poor Anna was exhibited in the courtroom, the fracture caused by the blow was explained to the jury by medical experts. Even this grisly sight did not disturb Cournou's stolidity. Dr. Flavart opined that the blow must have been struck with a hammer; Cournou only shrugged. Probably the witness with most cause to congratulate herself was Marguerite Labranche, a do-

mestic servant, who had been interviewed by Cournou at the employment agency before he engaged Anna. He had refused her because she had been too long in Marseilles.

I suppose that the confidential records of any great insurance company would furnish innumerable grim testimony of human tragedy and comedy. Except in such startling melodramas as the Snyder-Gray case these horrid episodes rarely obtain extensive ventilation. And as any publisher can tell you, the reading public prefers its crimes and detective stories in fiction form. But there must be some remarkable evenings, occasionally, if and when the legal counsel of insurance companies can be persuaded to talk.

Ardisson, whose indictment ran only as "tentative d'escroquerie" (attempted fraud), was acquitted. I hope that thereafter he was more choice in his associates. Clémencet was given fifteen years of hard labour; by the end of which time she probably found few to tutoyer. Cournou was condemned to death and executed. M. Chabrol, I like to believe, unravelled many more riddles in the underworld of Marseilles. And as for Marguerite Labranche, the domestic who didn't get the job, she is by now a mature lady of 67, her endowment insurance (if she has any) ought to be falling due, and I hope she occasionally burns a candle to her gods of good luck.

AN ADVENTURE IN PINK

THE 9:09 P.M. is the in-between train on our miscellaneous old Oyster Bay Branch. It is too late for the usual troop of commuters; too early for the smarter sort who have stayed in town for dinner and theatre. When you change at Jamaica and board the smoker of the steam train you find it populated with artisans whose provenance and employ I am ignorant to identify. Seemingly they are on their way home from Long Island City; most are of a Polish or Slavic cast. Occasionally one well heated with industrial alcohol will want to show you his new gold watch; otherwise they sit silent, each absorbed in the pink pages of an evening tabloid. The car is bright with those tinted sheets, fallen petals of this cabbage-rose of journalism are thick underfoot. These weary citizens in their thick brown overcoats brood attentively over the three topics of Sport, Murder, and Love Nests which are staple in the tabloids. It is odd to watch their hardy and seamed and simple faces—very tempting to the pencil, some of them—fixedly conning the evening potion of anæsthesia. It is a merely muscular massage of the cortical area, involving no wickedness of thought: pure anodyne, such as some other readers find in detective novels or O. Henry.

Hasty judgments are rash: therefore I tried to halt

the thought that pricked me as I saw all down the car that perspective of pink folios. It was this: that only the things not worth recognizing are immediately recognizable. For it was easy, even for short-trajectory vision, to see what they were reading; but there was one younger man, of a studious type, who had a small red book I would have given much to identify. It looked rather like one of the little Temple Shakespeares, but I couldn't be sure. He read it only fitfully, not with the slow and earnest perusal of the hoplites.

But I tried to medicine my too prompt opinion. Journalisticus sum, I said to myself; nihil journalistici a me alienum puto. And I picked up one of the pink 'uns and studied it carefully. The Love Nest story that was riding high that evening was very disappointing: the details were meagre indeed, and I reflected on the fact that the populace everywhere and always exists chiefly to be gulled. For if it is Love Nests that they want to read about, or Murders, or Prizefights, alas it is to literature and not to the tabloids that they would have to turn. Suppose that the little red book the young man was reading had been *Antony and Cleopatra,* how surprised our honest Polocks might have been to be told how much more melodramatic and thrilling it is, and how much more sprightly, than the liveliest tabloid. I thought with pleasure of the wittiest line of indecorum in Shakespeare, which occurs in that play.

I proceeded through an account of liquor smuggling, which threatened a huge scandal because this particular bootlegger was said to have among his customers "all the

most prominent people in New York." There seemed to be some failure in logic: anything that is being done by all the most prominent people can hardly be a scandal—except as regards the law that makes such subterfuge necessary. With that curiosity about the actual minutiæ of life which is so reprehensible I presently found myself studying the Classified Ads. I learned that girls you can get a free marcelle, manicure or hair cut, all day long, at the Niles Beauty School. That, I suppose, is how the apprentice operators get their practice. I learned how many openings there are for hostesses in Night Clubs, for chorus girls "experience unnecessary." Young Ladies over eighteen are wanted to act as dance partners at "New York's most beautiful ballroom," on 125th Street. And then, in among these flashes of the night I found a little announcement that said something like this:

> Do you like to get letters? Join our Correspondence Club and have friends everywhere.

This got me. I felt myself hooked. A man with any sense of shame, considering the pile of overdue correspondence on his table at home, would have averted his eyes from temptation. But in admiring the great pageant of humanity's doings there need be no sense of shame. That very night, in a somewhat debased orthography, I wrote:

Dear Friend, I seen your ad in the N. Y. C. Graphic and I certainly am a great one for writeing letters and receiving same send me your full information and oblige Mr. C. Mosley.

Now it should be stated that in my simplicity I had had no very definite idea as to the nature of this Correspondence Club. I had supposed that perhaps, for a small fee, the name and P.O. box number of the scribophilous Mr. C. Mosley would be forwarded to various other great ones for writing letters, from whom he would presently receive the surcharge of their enthusiastic penmanship. I had simply, as did Louis Stevenson in his childish dream, "heard the sound of pens writing." The inwardness of the scheme had never occurred to me. I was the more surprised to receive, promptly among the Christmas mail, the following dulcet mimeograph. At the top of the page were two little hearts, each transfixed with an arrow, and then:

DEAR SIR:

We believe you will enjoy your membership in our Club, and also appreciate the fact, that we are about to count you in our vast number of life long friends, because we shall do our utmost to bring you to a happy station in life.

Look over the Magazine carefully—note that all our work is clean and dignified—and that Magazine is published, for the one purpose, of making lonely people happy —and not for advertising in-respectable and indecent merchandise.

Should you not see the exact type of lady desired, listed in our Magazine, will say,—that is no reason why you should not join at once, as every day, we receive from 5 to 10 new Lady applicants, and also have many lady members who are in the Private Class—for which we must Personally select suitable gentlemen correspondents, privately.— So do not hold up your application, but send in at once,— telling us just what type of a companion you desire. It

will be to your advantage, to do so, as we have so many desirable ladies, of all ages and circumstances,—located in every State and Canada—"From the Golden Wheat Fields of the Great North West—to the Balmy shores of Sunny Florida."

You made a wonderful start my friend, when you wrote for our literature. Act On It, My Dear Sir. Our Registration fee for membership, is, at the present time—reduced from $5.00 per year to $3.00 payable in advance. We have no charge after marriage.

Then we will look for your application by return mail, telling us just the type of "A Sweet One" you desire. Thanking you again for writing, and the opportunity to serve, we remain,

Well, of course this took me right back to O. Henry's perfect story on this topic—"The Exact Science of Matrimony"—in that most amusing of all books *The Gentle Grafter*. And I fear that the Follow-Up desk of the Correspondence Club will lament the defection of the impulsive Mr. C. Mosley. But he would have been less than human if he had not looked over the list of Lady Members (enclosed with the letter) offering themselves as correspondents. "Widow by death" is a frequent description of their status, and a great many seem to be members of a sorority unknown to me, the Order of the Eastern Star. I am glad to observe also that often they show a sound prudential instinct. For instance—

Refined American widow, Protestant, age 42, 5 ft 4, wt. 116, sweet disposition, very congenial and affectionate, lover of home, can drive a car, musical, good singer, excellent

housekeeper, am very lonely. Would like to hear from gentlemen of good morals and owning a car.

Another interesting phrase that occurs frequently in these little self-portraits is the description of one's religion as Golden Rule. There is one lady, age twenty-six, who is

Considered handsome, high cultured, College and University education, speak seven languages, very little English (but can learn easy), Registered Nurse, play violin, fond of home, best housekeeper, will answer all when stamp is enclosed.

S316, from Connecticut, is more gamesome:

Stylish and charming American lady, 36, 5 ft. 4, wt. 138, golden brown hair, blue eyes, jovial disposition. Baptist. Will exchange photos with a good looking, jovial man. Object pastime and what might follow.

I must admit that the one who allured me most was one who described herself as a Lady Detective. Wooing a Lady Detective by mail sounds like a plot worthy of Farquhar. Beaux with Stratagems should be interested in the number of desiderating heiresses:—

Neat, Pleasant Scotch-Irish widow by death, no family, age 57, 5 ft. 5, wt. 150, auburn hair, blue eyes, Presbyterian faith, good character and lead a clean life. Am very lonely and would appreciate and marry a good man. I have plenty of the world's goods, I seek company only. All a man needs to do is step into a comfortable home, sit down to a well-

spread table, and not a dollar expense to him. I don't ask a man to support me.

Have a cozy, comfortable and inviting home. Would adore a real man, who is looking for a real loving lady, would give him the best of care and attention, if he would appreciate the comforts of a real home. I am very lonely as I sit home alone. American Catholic Lady, age 42, wt. 130, black hair, brown eyes, good education, nice looking, play piano. Worth over $20,000, widow by death. Dear Friend—Please write for early marriage.

Am a good Friend and a wonderful Pal—True home-lover and a good housekeeper. Have a beautiful home, also summer home at the Sea Shore. Have the best of character and high standing. College education, very attractive, age 53, 5 ft. 7, wt. 130, brown hair, hazel eyes, Baptist. Worth over $18,000. Would be happy to hear from a home-loving educated gentleman.

Have a most beautiful estate, large home, worth $60,000, no encumbrances, no debts. Refined American Lady, perfect health, age 44, 5 ft. 2, wt. 145, brown hair, blue eyes, very nice looking, good figure, Protestant. I want a good kind husband, one that I can love with all my heart and one that will love and appreciate a good true wife.

Honestly and Sincerely—I seek a real home-loving husband. Have a nice 11-room modern home worth $15,000, nicely located. Educated English-American Lady, age 36, 5 ft. 6, wt. 132, brown hair, blue eyes, above the average in appearance, social personality. I accumulated my property with no assistance except my own brain. Am not stingy or extravagant.

Slender, shapely, pretty, College educated, refined, American girl, age 22, 5 ft. 6, wt. 116, dark brown curly hair, deep blue eyes, musical education, Methodist faith, worth $10,000, will inherit $75,000. Am a worthy, self-respecting, honorable and trustworthy young woman.

Very neat and attractive, highly educated American girl, age 24, 5 ft. 3, wt. 125, brown hair and eyes, shapely figure, Methodist, have an ideal modern home of my own, am worth at least $60,000, will inherit $20,000 more. Will marry. Character, intelligence, honesty and ability mean more to me than means. Who will write?

Something cheerfully Western emanates from S. 250 of Texas:—

Honest upright girl, good natured and peaceful, good form, no beauty, but nice looking, American, age 19, 5 ft. 5, wt. 140, auburn hair, blue eyes. Will make some true man a good pal.

The only one of these ladies who mentions a taste for books is an Illinois widow, age 60, wt. 185. But it would certainly be worth the $3 registration fee to write to some of them and find out what they read. Does anyone want to undertake the inquiry, purely in the interest of sociology?

FAIRY TALES

ONE very wet evening in the autumn of 1912 I lay in bed in a hotel in Basel, Switzerland. I had been bicycling all day in thick rain, I had no change of clothes, there was nothing to do but get among the feathers and abide there patiently until the chambermaid could find room near the kitchen stove for my soggy garments. Even my rucksack had leaked, my pyjamas were damp. Into the soft plump sandwich that small European inns call a bed, I mounted with all the simplicity of Madeline in "The Eve of St. Agnes"; and like her lay trembling in my chilly nest. But soon I was warmed with the most spiritual of calorifics: laughter. I lay there cackling; and the chambermaid (to whom, through the open transom, I had passed my humble tweeds and naperies) must have been more than confirmed in her suspicion that Swiss hotels harbour some queer ones.

For in bed with me I had a copy of Hauff's *Märchen* that I had found in the smoking room. Not the Hauff that many of us have encountered at school, but Hauff inexpurgate, Hauff entire, Hauff *Fullstanding Outgive* as the Germans put it. And in the middle of the volume I had come upon a tale called ——, but I shan't tell you the title, because it's a clumsy one. So brilliant a narrator as

Wilhelm Hauff should have known better: his title gives away the whole nub of the fable.

Briefly, the story (written about a hundred years ago) is this. To a gossipy little village in South Germany comes an elderly stranger, who causes much indignation among the natives because they know nothing about him. He takes no part in the village life, declines all invitations, and lives taciturn and retired in an old tumble-down mansion which he has furnished with very odd articles including scientific instruments. None of the citizens are admitted to his house, and in the course of years legend accumulates. He is supposed to be a sorcerer.

The only time the Stranger shows the slightest interest in outside matters is once when a travelling circus comes to town and happens to perform under his windows. To everyone's surprise he leans out and applauds the trained animals, laughs tremendously, and throws down money. That same evening he hires a carriage and horses and drives off into the darkness. Late at night he returns with an unknown companion whom he passes by the town gatekeeper with the explanation that it is his nephew from abroad who has come to live with him. The nephew talks an unfamiliar language and knows no German; but the gatekeeper believes he has heard him say "Goddam." The town therefore concludes that he is English, and he is known henceforth as the Young Englishman.

The Young Englishman does not prove more sociable than his uncle; neither of them appears in public; but a new source of gossip arises. For the most hideous

shouting and uproar is occasionally heard in the Stranger's house, and even glimpses of the uncle pursuing his kinsman with a whip. This threatens to become a legal matter until the old gentleman explains to the mayor that he is teaching his nephew German, and his stupidity is such that only chastisement can avail. He is teaching him German, the uncle says, so that as soon as the young man is properly polished he can enter into the pleasures of the village society. Dancing lessons follow; and eventually, to the huge delight of the townspeople, uncle and nephew begin a round of calls and enter with zest into the social life of the place.

The nephew is found to be a very odd fellow. He wears big shell spectacles (of the Harold Lloyd sort: I have often thought how delightfully Mr. Lloyd could play this tale in the movies), never removes his gloves, puts his feet up on chairs, speaks in a guttural voice with a weird accent and sometimes (in spasms of a kind of nervous hysteria which afflicts him, so the uncle explains) makes odd grimaces, cuts the most outrageous capers. But the villagers, regarding him as an English aristocrat, condone all this; and little by little the younger generation of the town take to imitating him, even down to wearing shell spectacles and contradicting the political opinions of their elders. It is at dancing parties above all that the nephew shines. Provincial etiquette bothers him little: he makes straight for the lady that takes his fancy, twirls faster and faster, and finally in the excess of his high spirits bursts into yells of merriment, dances on his hands, and has to be dis-

ciplined by his guardian. I cannot take space to synopsize all the agreeable satiric and comic touches with which Hauff develops his tale. But everything is forgiven the young Englishman for the gusto of his high spirits; the citizens are enchanted to believe that such a distinguished and eccentric foreigner finds in their village just the social charm he had missed everywhere else.

But the *dénouement* arrives at the annual concert where the nephew is to sing a duet with the mayor's daughter. His uncle not being there to restrain him, the young gallant completely disgraces himself, and turns out to be a trained orang-utang dressed up in clothes and a wig. Furious, the villagers hasten to the Stranger's home for revenge. They find he has skipped, leaving a note urging them in future not to try to compel those who want to live for their own concerns to enter into the trivial round of provincial society.

And then twelve years later, on a beach in Normandy between swims, I read another ambiguous (or shall we say amphibious?) fairy tale. It was less broadly comic, but more delicately humorous: it quivered with dazzling laughter just as that wide beach was trembling in sunlight. It was De Musset's "Story of a White Blackbird," which begins as a wistful allegory and then turns almost too narrowly into a literary satire. But I think of these two as among the fairy tales that have made the sharpest impression on me: so much so that they sensitized me in the way great art can always do, and I shall never forget the exact circumstances in which I read them. The conclusion (or rather the progression)

that I draw from these two fables will now seem a long leap; but the mind has its own cobweb analogies by which it keeps the world from falling to bits around it.

I was talking the other day with a man who has been whaling; he spoke of the nakedness of the whale. This, I said, was something I felt I could not endure to see, or even to think of. The great achievement of humanity, I suggested, was that it does not admit things. There are matters (as Whitman cried out in his anguished palinode passages, where he speaks of himself as a traitor) that humanity does better not to scrutinize. Matters that need (in the jolly old phrase) to be minced. My companion, if I understood his rather troubled accent, agreed. When you see the whale naked, he said, it seems as though all reticence of every sort is destroyed. The starkness of biology lies bare. It is not so much that one feels it indecent; worse, for one appalling moment there is no longer any such conception as decency.

Here, obviously, is the theme for a fairy tale—as the whale himself began by being a fairy tale; and it takes us on (hurries us into sublimity, if you like) toward our grandest collection of oblique fancies, the Bible. The whale naked, I thought, would be as shameful as was Noah to his sons; for the whale, in the animal hierarchy, may be regarded as the father of us all. The Noah boys walked backward to cover the old tippler, and fairy tales are men's ways of walking backward to kilt the intemperance of Nature. When you find anyone not admitting things you know he knows, you have found the beginning of art.

So, though it is sad, it is perfectly understandable why parents and publishers and booksellers nowadays don't give children access to the real old fairy tales, but fob them off with Squirrel Nutkin and Raggedy Andy and Peter Rabbit. The modern denatured myth doesn't walk backward, for it has nothing to hide; it is merely fantastic and extravagant. The original fairy tales were not bedtime stories, they were nightmares. They were terrible with meaning, and like the Bible only the very reckless or the very innocent can afford to read them.

IT CUTS

IT CUTS—easily—a half hour." The words, spoken behind me in the smoker, might have meant very little to some. But to me, and particularly that morning, how naturally they flowed into the channel of my own thinking. If you are interested in the theatre, and particularly if you are a not-yet-produced playwright, there are no trains so pleasant as those on the Great Neck line of the L. I. R. R. There, at almost any hour of night or day, you will overhear someone in the smoker discussing the quaint minutiæ of the stage world. And as I had spent the evening before in some final and ruthless cutting of a drama of my own, and had the very script in my lap, I should have liked to turn round and study the faces of the unknown surgeons.

"It cuts—easily—a half hour." I had spent the night before looking over a great mass of discarded MS., rough drafts and so on, all that débris of writing and rewriting familiar to everyone who has attempted anything in this most exacting of all forms of composition. I had looked, with faintly melancholy resignation, upon pleasing lines (that seemed such sure laughter or such moving pathos!) discarded as being unnecessary baggage, and now never to be uttered anywhere by anyone. Unless indeed one could some day put together a one-act

fantasy composed of lines abandoned from other plays. What a queer farrago it would be; it might even prove to have some unexpected meaning or analogy. I know that in lecturing one always forgets the things one most wants to say, so that I have thought the best possible lecture would be one made up of the things forgotten in all other lectures. And the best kind of Future Life, if there should prove to be one, would give us a chance to "live-in" portions of our own text that were excised for the drastic requirements of this mundane stage.

After tackling a job of playwrighting, with its multitude of competing considerations, a thing like a novel seems almost cravenly simple. Mr. Galsworthy is of course quite right when he speaks (in his introduction to two short plays by Conrad) of the crippling limitation the stage imposes upon those who have experienced "the wider freedom and the more exquisite savour" of the novel. Yet still the drama remains the most exciting and tempting, and perhaps the most influential, of all forms of penmanship; and we live happily in a day when it has become experimental once more and alive with the thrill of new effects and gustos. Even those "capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows" (Hamlet's phrase for the baser sort of movies, that tear passion to titters, has never been surpassed) are still ready to be troubled by genuine anxieties if we can medicine them with the bright stab of laughter.

The playwright, who enters so completely into the movements of his phantoms, must also be courageous enough to participate in his own, and scan them with

the clear eye of self-raillery. I suppose there are documents on record that give a sort of clinical history of the absurdities of people's conduct while writing plays. If not, I could supply data. Nor does it matter very much, from the scientific standpoint, whether the play is genuine or mere fustian. The author's symptoms are much the same in either case. I remember coming into the newspaper office with the script of one scene in my arms, like a new-born baby, and shouting out to a patient colleague (who still calmly endures my ridiculous behaviours) "of course there's only one word for this."—What the word was I am loth to avow; it was the same word that Conrad and Hueffer exclaimed of a passage in *Youth* (see Hueffer's appendix to *The Nature of a Crime,* where you will hunt in vain for anything startling enough in that passage to warrant their glorious outcry). The point is that in the joy and frenzy of the seizure you do really feel that way; anything can be endured as long as life can occasionally offer such moments. Afterwards, of course, you find out that you were wrong. The very scene I was so happy about proved, on subsequent cooling, to be the least effective of the whole piece, and now, eighteen months later, I have just managed to get it into more viable form. But not to reckon with these comedies of hallucination is to know nothing of the whole creative process.

I wonder if there is not a certain moral discipline in writing a play that an author can acquire in no other way. I believe that one who has spent a number of months in conning and computing the technical dexterities of the

job, the positive necessities of arranging his material so that the audience will not be bored, the requirements of physical incarnation of his dream, such a one will be less hasty to condemn any of the pragmatic sanctions of life. He will be, or ought to be, less drastic in sneering at the errors of churches, governments, universities, capitalist systems—any form of organization that works with queer human material and has to approximate. For the dramatist, relish it or not, faces what may be called a parliamentary problem. All his broodings and all the producer's effort are vain unless his ardently meditated lines are gathered together into one poised stroke, measured and fluent enough so that a handful of spectators, on one critical occasion, can apprehend his intention and transmit their pleasure, if any, to the amusable world on which he depends. A man who has had a successful play produced (I speak, of course, only by theory) has gone through Heaven knows how many telephone calls, inconclusive conferences, luncheon engagements where the producer did not arrive, midnight readings, for this single ordeal. If he has been skilful enough to compose all these elements into successful result, then I venture (subject to prompt refutation from the lives of playwrights) that he is, essentially, a moral man. He understands the strange emulsion of concession and compromise of which human morality consists. Henry James, for example, could not write a successful play. He was too intellectually selfish.

I would have liked to ask the men from Great Neck if they knew C. E. Montague's *Dramatic Values*. What

they said about cutting made me think they ought to enjoy that fine little book of theatre talk. I don't know that the playwright's problem has been much better stated than in Montague's chapter on Ibsen:

He knew precisely what a play was. He learned—central fact of all—that a play has only one-tenth the length of a novel; he learnt that a playgoer, unlike a reader, cannot skip, and that therefore he must never be let fall into the state of mind in which, if he were reading, he would skip; he learnt that dialogue is effective in a theatre only when every speech produces a distinct change in the relations of the speakers, that it must carry the hearer on over a rippled surface of small surprises to a foreseen goal, piquing curiosity in detail while meeting expectation on the whole; he learned how the characters of a play are mobilized; how their exits and entrances are brought into vital relation with the general purpose of the piece; how utterances, trivial and inexpressive in a poem or a novel, may take value and significance from the visible contact of their speakers with other persons or with a painted scene; how, on the other hand, telling effects characteristic of other forms of imaginative writing may be marred on the stage by the fact that the playgoer cannot turn back and look things up, that the pace is fixed for him . . . or by the equally imperious fact that we may read in solitude, but must usually hear a play in a crowd . . . face to face not merely with a work of art but the judgment of a public opinion upon it.

"It cuts—easily—a half hour." There was something in the confident way the words were said that led me to believe that the unknown speakers knew what they were talking about. They had the instinct, the fingertip sensibility of those who have, by long training, learned

to feel their way about in a crafty calling. Probably they could not express, with the wit, the irony, the charming shrewdness of Mr. Montague, the theories of their art; but I had a notion that they too understood Dramatic Values. I didn't even turn to look at them; but I paid them a more sincere tribute. Instead of delivering the script that day, I took it home again to see if there was still anything that absolutely must be cut.

EX LIBRIS CARISSIMIS

GONZALO, in *The Tempest,* would have been a good committee-man for the Book of the Month Club. It appears that his taste was unerring, and he was the first editor of a Desert Island Selection such as has often occupied the ingenuities of columnists. It was he who furnished the outcast Prospero with books for his isolation; and apparently he knew Prospero's tastes so well that he could choose (Act 1, Scene 2, 166-168) just those volumes which were the duke's dearest. Well does Miranda cry "Would I might see that man!" All this, however pleasing to the fancy, does not satisfy reason. No one but yourself really knows what books are most precious to you. The associations that make them so are obscure and private. Life, so long for thought but so brief for effective communication, will never offer sufficient leisure to explain in full the reasons why particular copies mean so much. There are many experts on the punctilio of editions, which is a kind of exact science, with its works of reference and its collation data. But the matter of Association Copies is quite other; there the amorist rises from mere lust to a high tenderness. He rises into the third and trismegist class of collectors as they are outlined in the Order of Morning Prayer. There you will find rubricated: the First Collect for the

Day; the Second Collect for Peace; the Third Collect for Grace. Among prizers of Association Books there can be, thank heaven, no experts; your associations are your own.

While I think of it, what a pleasant motto for the library of Duke University would be that line of Prospero's—*My library was dukedom large enough.*

I was thinking particularly of these matters because the other day Leary's old bookstore in Philadelphia, where I first learned something of the pleasure of book-hunting, returned to its new building on the old site—9 South Ninth Street—where it has been for fifty years. (The business will celebrate its centennial in 1937.) Compared to most of Leary's alumni I am a mere freshman; it is only a little over twenty years since I bought my first Leary book as a boy of sixteen. Mr. A. Edward Newton, at the celebration dinner given in the store, was bragging that it was forty-seven years since he made his first purchase there, a copy of White's *Selborne,* and there are many of Leary's bibliophiladelphians far more veteran than he. But for him, as for me and innumerable others, Leary lit the lamp, as he does in Stevenson's poem. Though the Caliph Newton's little copy of *Selborne,* when he showed it to me, did not seem a genuine Leary trove because it antedated the days of the little price-figure written in blue pencil with a slanting dash above it—Philip Warner's hand, I believe. That, for us of the later generations, is the sterling stigma of Leariana. I cannot be positive which was my own first purchase. I know that one of the prime advices Dr.

Gummere gave our freshman English class, that autumn of 1906, was to find our way to Leary's; where, he said, we might very likely learn more about literature than in any classroom lectures. But the freshman, learning his way about the new strange world of college, had little time (and indeed less money) to go junketing to town. So the earliest date I find in any of my Leariana is March 30, 1907—yes, and *Ex Libris* boldly scribed, probably for the first time. I don't find that self-conscious phrase in any of my previous acquisitions—mostly the little Altemus reprints, bought for 19 cents at Hochschild Kohn's in Baltimore. So I put the Anthology of English Poetry edited by a Ph. D. in Peoria as my first Leary. I don't mention the editor's name, for even at the age of sixteen I found his comments jejune. I see that I marked with an exclamation his prefatory note that "the arrangement is such that the study of English poetry is made scientific, and, as far as possible, all vagueness and illusions are removed from its teaching." And I queried his remark that "Pope is a second-rate poet because he could not create a dynamic phrase." Hum: I evidently thought then, as I do now, that that is the one thing in which Pope was supreme pontiff. Perhaps it was this Peoria editor who first instigated in me my unmannerly doubts upon the general run of textbook annotations on literature. Yet the anthology was well chosen, and became a real thesaurus to me; I pasted into it all sorts of newspaper reprints of famous poems and marked with heavy stripes of red chalk lines that excited me.

That is an example of what I mean when I say that no one can play Gonzalo for you. That is a book, in itself worthless, which is very dear to me; but Gonzalo, making a ransack of my shelves to fit me out for the Bermoothes, would never choose it. It is a confession of weakness, but I have many books that I should be sorry to lose. And they are so dispersedly and disorderly arranged that in any sudden emergency (as was suggested by a blaze we once had in our chimney) I could not possibly pick them out. Therefore I have frequently thought that I would rout round among them, make a list of (let us say) fifty or a hundred that I regard as essential to my own private felicity, and put these in a box convenient for immediate transport in case of fire, collision or scuttling. I am not really much of a sentimentalist about books; in case of necessity I could quite honestly cut myself down to half a dozen. With the Bible, Shakespeare, Blake, Keats, Whitman, and a good anthology of verse, I could repopulate my mind, yes, and give Miranda the equivalent of a course at Bryn Mawr. To these I would want Gonzalo to add if possible my old Wentworth's Algebra, and some Stevenson, Conrad, and O. Henry. Chaucer and Virgil would be desirable too. But I frankly admit I could get along without them.

So the list of fifty (or a hundred) that I should compile, as a bill of lading for my Gonzalo, would be not so much of necessities as of the things specially dear to me for tinctures of affection. Some of them he would know, if he had time to make a general search, by their having *Ex Libris Carissimis* written in them, an ejaculation

of enthusiasm that I have occasionally inscribed in favourite volumes—and once even (if I must be honest) in one written by myself; I shan't tell you which. All book-impassioned zealots have their own little tricks: I know one wise collector who, aware of his heirs' ignorance of the finer shades of significance in his library, has pasted in his special treasures a little gold-paper star. This is to serve as a sort of Stop—Look—Listen signal, a warning that that volume is not to be disposed of without expert advice. But Gonzalo, by the terms of our fancy, must do his choosing hastily. In the dead of darkness the gates of Milan are opened; the rotten carcass of a boat waits some leagues at sea. Therefore some private memorandum for the honest old counsellor.

I wonder, though, if I should have the restraint to keep my list private? For the almost irresistible impulse of the inoculate is to tell others his happy symptoms; and the patterns of humane and humorous interest that exfoliate from a book that one cherishes are intricate and tempting. If I could tell in full (which I should not dream of doing) the adventures of my favourite copy of *Leaves of Grass,* a little leather-bound thin-paper edition given me ten years ago by Mr. Mitchell Kennerley, I should have the dangerous burden of a novel on my hands. I remember—one of the earliest of that copy's crises—that I took it in my pocket when I had to make up my mind whether or not to apply for exemption from the military draft in 1917; I sat by a small stream not far from Wyncote, Pa., and wrote down in parallel columns, on a blank page at the back, my own special

reasons pro and con going to war. That was not as easy a decision as you might imagine, and I set out my arguments on both sides with much candour. I destroyed the page afterward when, the book lying on my table in a newspaper office, I found one of my colleagues reading my forgotten dialogue with much interest. Or my *Trivia,* my *Mirror of the Sea,* my Rupert Brooke—I should like to set down some memorandum for Gonzalo about those special copies. As Harry B. Smith says in the preface to his famous Sentimental Library (my copy of which he honoured with the wittiest inscription I have ever seen, but too charming for quotation) the passion for palavering about his books is the dread malady of every collector. I shall resist it as long as I can; yet I don't trust Gonzalo as much as Prospero did. And was there, among those Island Nights' Entertainments, a single book apt for young Miranda?

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IT IS a fine thing to turn loose a poet on the job of biography; especially when it is so shrewd, simple, and tough a poet as Carl Sandburg. Mr. Strunsky has spoken lately of a tendency of the biography of irony to decline into the biography of snicker. Sandburg's *Lincoln,* in this age of biography, is a different sort of life-story altogether; the biography of poetry. Sandburg has written this book exactly as he writes his verse: there is the same musical, melancholy cadence, the same vivid touch upon tangible and visible essentials, the same occasional (but fortunately rare) slidder upon a bit of too slippery sentiment. The Rootabaga note, as one might call it, just a few times seems to me to betray him; but even where it does it comes, somehow, as a part of the story because it is part of Carl himself, the old darling. I only mention my one or two anxieties about occasional fragments of the book because they enforce my private notion that in any really great piece of work the imperfections, if they are of the right sort, are a needful element of the greatness. Sandburg has achieved the crowning success of having done the one book that he, of all men now living, was specially designated to do. The Rootabaga fairy taler has hit upon the queerest fairy tale of all. If there is anything characteristically American, in its comedy and

tragedy and sentiment, this is it: as American as Will Rogers or Henry Ford's fiddler. With magnificent shrewdness Sandburg does not tell the whole story. He leaves it at the point where Lincoln, after cording up his trunks himself and tacking on them a card—*A. Lincoln, The White House, Washington*—gets on the train at Springfield. The engine with a queer big stovepipe, the man with a queer big stovepipe, and newly growing whiskers (tragic or pathetic attempt to be modish?) go off into the misty horizon. "Good-bye, Abe."

"Perhaps poetry, art, human behaviour in this country, which has need to build on its own traditions, would be served by a life of Lincoln stressing the fifty-two years previous to his Presidency." So Sandburg in his preface; perhaps it is important that he puts poetry first in the possible beneficiaries of his labour. The greatest tribute that could be paid this beautifully moving book would be, for a modest while anyhow, an increase in the general tract of silence. Sandburg whittles Lincoln out of the arbor vitae, and chip by chip the effigy comes clean. And the effect on "human behaviour" is powerful, as Sandburg hoped it might be. This is a prairie history, with prairie horizons, woven of a thousand anecdotes, traditions, sayings, memories. It is the fruit of thousands of conversations and gleanings, and behind and within all are the silences of Lincoln, the silences of Sandburg too. There are two kinds of silence: silence absolute, and silence while someone else is talking. Both are in this book. And in it the corn grows and the stars prick their patterns and the axe clips deep into the trunk and country boys have

their feet in the clear shallows of Knob Creek. There is in it the poet's sense of life; the same sense of life you find in the Æneid.

When you open this book at the frontispiece and see the photograph of Lincoln's axe-helve, with his name cut into it; or when you find pictured the stone on which he scratched his poor betrothal, July 4, 1833, you are startled, perhaps, by the painful intimation that the Lincoln legends were facts; that it all really did happen very much as you had always heard. That is the dangerous thing about the fairy tales you erect in your own heart: they often prove to be true. The Lincoln legends have gone so deep into us that few now can dispassionately scrutinize them; but it does appear that he was much the kind of man we would have hoped. Through Sandburg's sober shrewdness, we know that the Lincoln of our dreams was something pretty close to the actual. When I speak of Sandburg's shrewdness, I mean, for example, the way he estimates the precise value of the small-town gossip about Lincoln and Mrs. Lincoln. He seems to understand exactly, as few people do, just how far to credit mere tittle-tattle. There are some temperaments for which a farce like *Abie's Irish Rose* is as profoundly disturbing and tragic as *Hamlet*. The story of Lincoln and Mrs. Lincoln is perhaps one of those reversible comedies.

You will be reading this book anyway; that I take for granted, and it will give you silences of your own. You will find, then, that Lincoln was thus and so; but the important thing, as Carl Sandburg himself would insist, is the effect, if any, on human behaviour. A queer notion

keeps coming to me. It is customary, in reading of these wilderness boyhoods and the hardships and makeshifts of pioneer days, to lament for ourselves the disappearance of that old gruelling life, its tough ordeals and its Spartan pangs. What have we got, we ask ourselves, in the civilization we know, that can produce the genuine article of humanity? And then I wonder whether the wilderness of a modern city doesn't nourish a pioneering spirit as hardy as any of old Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois? The actual physical stress may be different but it is almost as severe; and the mental strain is surely much more intense. If great achievements spring from great anxieties and sufferings, then surely New York as we see it should be as potent to germinate great citizens, great artists, as New Salem or Springfield ninety years ago. C. E. M. Joad, a British philosopher, has written a gorgeously candid tractate, *Thrasymachus, or The Future of Morals*. At the conclusion of his essay he admits that all he can foresee for the next fifty years is a growing backwash of Puritanism which will bring about a natural and commendable growth in hypocrisy; the world will tend to become "a paradise for the average man and a hell for the exceptional one." There can be no real morality until "the life-force can contrive again to send a great religious teacher into the world." In the world as we see it, Joad says, "those who think the least have the best of it." And as for American civilization, its objects are "to substitute cleanliness for beauty, mechanism for men, and hypocrisy for morals. It devotes so much energy to obtaining the means to make life possible, that it has none left to practise the

art of living. And the drift of British development follows increasingly the course set by America."

Joad's book will startle and trouble some of its readers, but it runs marvellously close to the current of a million minds nowadays. And his suggestion that we shall be happier by not attempting to think comes with queer force just after we have read Sandburg's *Lincoln* which causes one to do a good deal of—well, if not thinking, at any rate musing. When another "great religious teacher" comes, or another Lincoln, the outcry of anger and derision will be even fiercer than before. The megaphones are bigger. But I cling to the thought that if he comes it will not necessarily be from the great corn-growing prairie. Perhaps the almost incredibly complex and dangerous hardships of some great city with its subtle stimuli to heart and nerve and appetite, will beget and toughen that spiritual pioneer. And his biography, when written, might even show as frontispiece some common symbol just as romantic and laborious as Lincoln's worn axe-handle; if it were only a brief-case he had carried in the daily swink of the subway.

There is one final thought that comes about Lincoln, which must have struck anyone who has studied the photographs of his face. Perhaps he was singularly unskilful in a matter where most of us are very adept—the art of deceiving himself. It is hard, somehow, to imagine him outwitting his own sombre and humorous judgment by any specious sophistries. As we study that face we love him almost as we all love the most lovable person we know—ourselves. We love him because we see in him

what everyone secretly knows, the capacity for suffering. As Carl Sandburg suggests, there is a parable of Abe in the story of the Indiana boy who said to Lincoln, "Abe, I don't s'pose there's anybody on earth likes gingerbread better'n I do—and gets less'n I do."

As long as such books as this can be written, and can move us as deeply as they do, we have nobly saved, and not meanly lost, the wealth of that greatest American fairy tale.

THE WHISTLE

WAS it in one of Charles Lamb's writings that he described sitting on the grassy knoll of Primrose Hill with a familiar damsel? And a funny silly old pensioner came up behind them, blew a shrill whistle, and said that the London County Council (or whatever it was) didn't like people to sit, even with decorum, on the grass in pairs. And Lamb (it must have been Lamb) replied that Dulcie (the name of his companion)—that Dulcie and Decorum were inseparable, as they had been in the Latin poets. But the adorable scandalized old comic merely pointed with his stick toward the gravelled and undallying path.

I can hear just such a whistle sounding from some readers of Llewelyn Powys's lovely book *The Verdict of Bridlegoose.* I can hear all sorts of cautious and civil mandarins chirruping that it is "pathological" (whatever that means) and shamelessly pagan. The alumnæ of Miss Spence's school will certainly inquire how it came about that Llewelyn Powys was invited to lecture. The well-to-do brokers who seemed to Powys to have "the mental development of a set of professional golf-players . . . by God, they did look like a bagful of foxes" will be spared embarrassment, for it's not the kind of book they'll ever hear of. But a certain kind of reader will hail *Bridlegoose*

with a leaping heart; will know it for what it is, a thoroughly dangerous book; for Powys has put down, with candor as exact as a secret diarist's, the kind of thing that men really think.

I remember mighty well when the old *Evening Post* began to print those little African sketches by Llewelyn Powys; I remember the thrill of astonished delight that moved in some young pagan bosoms in the office; and how promptly the well-bred and high-born readers of the *Post* fell upon Harry Dounce, the editor who had dared entrust a little literature to the "magazine pages" he was charged with. Mr. Powys himself, recalling those days in this book, pays just tribute to Mr. Dounce's hospitality, but leaves the untutored reader likely to suppose that the $3.75 paid for the first of those gorgeous fragments was Harry's own valuation. Alas, the Magazine Editor was tied like Ixion to the wheel of a budget. No other newspaper man in his position, most likely, would have ventured more than the postage necessary to take the MS. back to the room—opposite a theological seminary—where L. P. was emanating such savoury and untheological proses. Powys seems to have been singularly fortunate, the marrowy reader of this book will incidentally remark, in some of his New York lodgings. It seems that his neighbours always had limbs of "peeled willow" and never pulled down the blinds. There are some familiar figures of our Babylonian scene who would have been wiser to draw the shades while L. P. was here, for he has caught the outlines of their nudity in most entertaining flashes.

Indeed it would be highly ill-advised to admit how

enjoyable is Mr. Powys's little autopsy into American life. And it is more than that, it is important. Only a man who has lived with death in his veins, as Powys has, would be so nobly and scurrilously honest. He has rid his mind, he tells us, of a good many "mean moralities." We all have our own escapade from the unendurable stupidity of the mob. I am not wise enough to know whether Powys's doctrine is better or worse than some other ways of studying the star-pattern. I can only say that he gives us, in this savagely thrilling verdict, as accurate a picture as I have ever read of a certain type of mind, tormented by the bacilli of beauty and lust.

Loving America as much as he does, and particularly loving New York (I bless him in my heart for his glimpses of what she means) he is just enough to say some gingery things. It is quite possible indeed, as he suggested to Bertrand Russell, that America is perhaps "the greatest menace to civilization that the world has yet seen." This epigram, originally coined by Charles Dickens to shock the women's clubs, now grows a little elderly. It doesn't really matter (and L. P. would be the first to agree) whether or not America is a menace—like pyorrhea. What does matter is whether it is amusing. Does it minister to what L. P. finely calls "that fortunate state of awareness which alone would seem to justify our existence"? I think it does. And it isn't the artist's business anyhow to worry about civilization, but to turn the life about him, as best he can, to his own gloriously selfish purpose. I think I, as much as the average man, have stifled and stewed and simmered, in private, against

the horrors of Americanism; have damned the magnificent and insane comedy of our septic herd-mania; have grunted to see fine lives crushed and mumbled out of shape by the infernal mass pressure of our huge stupidities. But I can also say to myself, if I sit soberly and construe the matter, that I doubt if any other state of affairs would have been any better. Things will be a lot worse a hundred years forward, quite possibly; and I think we're lucky, my masters, to be of our prime just now. I doubt if any time, anywhere, was more potent to thrill the artist. This America looks to me more fertile in humour and horror and gross absurdity than anything else I can think of. The jungle of New York is as thrilling a hunting ground as the Africa Mr. Powys knows. Here too there are the great rhinos to be brought crashing to earth; and the twittering owls and the beaky fowls of bright plumage. And sometimes—trying to defend myself against over-praising this enchanting book—I say to myself that L. P. is a little less than square to the average inhibited and toiling man, who is a good deal of a hero in his way. He drugs himself with mean employ, no doubt; but it *is* a drug. Few, in this complex issue of living, can justly applaud themselves for such frank "agrarianism" as Mr. Powys winningly calls it.

Imagination and malice and charm and animal gusto and good crafty prose, these are not common of course; but they can be found often enough by those who know where to look. But the few and fit will read Mr. Powys's testament of paganism with the relish reserved only for the thoroughly immoral and beautiful book. Perhaps he

overrates the importance of healthy animal capers. (I say, *perhaps;* the matter will never be solved.) But he has the greatest gift of all, has it in magnificent Elizabethan richness: something I only know how to describe as the artist's feeling for life. He has the awareness, he is not caught and dragooned by bogus mummery. He is not just a carbon-paper reprint of what someone else told him he ought to believe. I like to see a man getting some fun out of his life, and saying what he thinks. And by heaven I like to see a man who knows how to write, who draws his words from deep soil and old vatted lingo. Powys's English is rooted and sinewy. He knows—and how important it is to know—the perfection of unimportance of some gaudily spotlighted figures in the world of the arts. It sparkles my veins to read this book, it is the work of an honest man. I shall smile to see it praised by the very people who would never have bought his stuff when he was poor and unknown.

Be careful, Dulcie and Decorum might have said to the dear old idiot on Primrose Hill, be careful how you blow that whistle out here in the sunlight and the grassy air. You'll start up other whistlings in the pinewood covert—the unanswerable trills of Pan.

"PRETENDING TO SLEEP"

WHAT are you working on now, is a question they frequently ask you. You must not try to tell them. You couldn't even if you would; and if it were possible it would not be wise.

The strange certainty that the conception, though still haphazard, partial, dim, will work itself out, will come to pass, is the craftsman's anchor to windward. If he has that certainty well bedded down in good holding bottom he can ride many a stiff onshore gust of procrastination and doubt. It is well to remember how little offing the artist—any artist—has. The beach is very near. I mean psychically as well as financially.

Paul Valéry of the French Academy has written a book of essays called *Variety,* now published in an able translation by Malcolm Cowley. It is a book too profound for me to venture any systematic comment, but as it deals with matters in which we all have a right to speculate—the workings of the mind—I am not ashamed to set down some of my own thoughts. The word *speculate* is well chosen for its double intention. M. Valéry plays hazard among the most delicate and dangerous equilibria we have to consider. Whether writing about La Fontaine or Poe or Proust or Leonardo his theme is really the same: an introspection of the imaginative psyche and how

it behaves under the pressure of creative desire. Not often before have I had a happier thrill of verification than in Valéry's pages: here, as previously in Remy de Gourmont, in Santayana, in André Gide, I have exclaimed to myself that this is a man who gives a recognizable picture of the unpicturable: the joys and anxieties of the expectant artist, the fantastic process of the pre-natal care of literature. What actually happens to a work of art before it is born is the gravest problem to the artist; it is a theme mostly disregarded by critics.

And naturally. It is one of those topics (of which there are more than you might suppose) on which whatever you say is more than likely to be nonsense; indeed, ought to be nonsense. The instinct of the writer who cannot and will not tell his friends what he is working on is based in a fear and shyness unspeakably wise. The innumerable amazements and symbolisms of every day are metabolizing his secret congestion; he is purged and poisoned thirty times a week, he shifts the burden of his reverie from one side to another to see how it carries easiest, there grows in him a mixed ferment and indolence, hope and horror, which only some fellow-initiate can properly envy or deplore. His black immersion in self, mingled with his naturally affectionate curiosity about other human beings, makes his conduct grotesque. Playing choice and chance among a continual flicker of significances, constantly thinking of things that can never be mentioned, arrogant and apprehensive by turns, all he can rely on is that sense of certainty: the assurance that it will come. But you must not wonder at his idiotic bearing when someone says

"What are you working on now?" Some of the incontinuities and queer lopsides of this human race, if there are any, as some surmise, are due to Satan's casual visit to Eden on the sixth day, our birthday. He had heard that something was going on. "Well," he asked the Creator, "and what are you working on now?"

Of the great number of things in M. Valéry's book that I should like to quote, of the hundred or so passages of superb shrewdness and subtle understanding, I choose one particularly:

It is seldom that the lessons which literary history claims to teach have any bearing on the secret of how poems are made. Everything takes place within the artist, as if the observable events of his life had only a superficial influence on his works. The one important fact—the very act of the Muses—is independent of adventures, of the author's mode of life, of incidents, and of anything that could figure in a biography. Everything which history can observe is unimportant.

The essentials of his work are indefinable circumstances, occult encounters, facts visible to one man only, and others which are so easy or familiar to this one man that he disregards them. By examining ourselves, we can easily discover that these incessant and impalpable events are the solid matter of our true personality.

Every creative being is half certain, half uncertain, of his own powers; he feels a known and an unknown, whose incessant relations and unexpected exchanges finally give birth to some production. I do not know what I shall do; yet my mind thinks that it knows itself, and I build and count on this knowledge, which I call *myself*. But *I shall surprise myself;* if I doubted this, I should be nothing. I know that I shall be astonished by this or that thought which will

soon occur to me—and yet I demand this surprise! I build and count on it, as I count on my certainty. I hope for something unexpected which I shall create; I have need of my known and my unknown. . . .

Let us despair of having clear vision in these matters, and soothe ourselves with an image. I can imagine this poet, his mind full of ruses and resources, pretending to sleep in the imaginary centre of his still uncreated work, better to capture that moment of his own greatest power which is his prey. In the vague depth of his eyes, all the forces of his desire and all the springs of his instinct are stretched taut. And there, intent on the chances from which she selects her nourishment; there, very obscure in the midst of the nets which she has woven out of words, a mysterious Arachne, muse of the hunt, watches in silence.

Yes; "pretending to sleep." And he does not talk in his sleep; rather he sleeps in his talk. The only thing I a little demur to is limiting this dreaming life specifically to the artists, for in degree it is true of every human being. Symbolisms and fables are his preoccupation, and if he happens to be intent upon some still unaccomplished fancy he weaves them all into the fabric to see how and where they join his weave. Everything, from Orion's dancing figure sprawled across the sky, to the motor truck marked COAL AND ICE (surely there is some huge significance that these two cancelling opposites are always sold by the same merchant)—everything is calory to his huge appetite for pattern. The enormous uneasiness he feels rises from the large incongruity between his necessary deportment and the cruel insatiate demands of his embryo. So he keeps to the twilight of the mind, takes

his dumb pleasure apart from scrutiny. He yearns, as all men must, for the long days and sun-warmed ground of spring; yet he dreads it too; dreads those long dusks that turn good-byes into farewells, that shorten the winter nights so fit for silence, for poetries unwritten. Yet spring will come, and the generous daylight that compels too close a study of the dangerous earth.

"A good style in literature," said Ford Madox Ford in his book on Conrad, "if closely examined, will be seen to consist in a constant succession of tiny surprises." A very shrewd remark, and perhaps it is so because the artist's own life is a constant succession of magical amazements. And this faculty of surprising himself, which M. Valéry points out, is the happiest apoplexy in the whole disease. For that bliss, long despaired of, hoped for, counted on, he must sacrifice so much; you will forgive him some truancies.

Still it remains unpredictable, unamenable to paradigm. The analogy is grotesque, but I think of the mind as a kind of Chinese restaurant where little tables, dimly lit, are set about a polished dancing floor. Soft-footed Oriental boys, dressed in black, pass among the patrons; their demeanour has the vague inscrutability their race suggests to Westerners. The guests at the little tables are Thoughts. The foreign and gently misunderstandable servitors are the things that happen to us—the things that biographers can see. They, and the chop suey, are the visible explanation of the patrons' presence. Every now and then, with one accord, you will see all the Thoughts leave their tables and dance. To an unprejudiced other-

planetary observer, looking (as we all do) from another star, it might be thought that the flitting and enigmatic visitation of those dark attendants was the explanation of the dance. To his observation the music, concealed in some balcony, would not be sensible.

Why and when those Thoughts will leave their chop suey and begin to dance, that is the problem.

NOTES ON ROSY

DR. ROSENBACH is one of the world's greatest hunters—and finders—of manuscript; yet there will be no manuscript (in any exact sense) of his own very interesting *Books and Bidders*. It was dictated, and a remarkable job of dictation it was. Avery Strakosch, who was at the notebook end of the collaboration, must possess in high degree the great gift of translucency, for the Doctor's own easy colloquy and lively humour come through with every symptom of identity. It is a book packed full of Dr. Rosenbach's learning, but also rich in merry anecdote. One remembers the great day when an editor of the *World*, wishing to pay high tribute to Miss Amy Lowell's Life of Keats, avouched in print that he "had read nothing so nugatory in a long time." It was his idea, evidently, that "nugatory" meant "full of nuggets." And if that were the meaning, *Books and Bidders* would also be nugatory, delightfully so.

The gift of jocundity seems to be a characteristic of the great bibliophiles. Here again, popular tradition is wrong as usual. The general notion of book collectors as prosy ancients, shiny at elbows, soupy on the vest, shrivelled and stooped by years among fungus-smelling pages, is certainly false in my observation. So far as I have seen them they are pink and plump, connoisseurs of vivacity, tellers of phosphorescent adventure, frolic amateurs of all life's

more generous pastime. They seem to get more fun out of this planet than any other class of human beings. They extra-illuminate the book of life with fore-edge painting.

Book Collecting, like horse racing, has always been the supreme sport of the Rich and Powerful. But it now stands on a peculiar apex of joy in America, for it has seriously entered the ranks of Big Business. Dr. Rosenbach often shows the specially amused and quiet smile of the scholar who has outwitted so many great merchants at their own game—as indeed the scholar so often can, if he cares to. Not without humour he tells of the hard-headed investors who tuck away Conrad MSS. and Whitman items in safe deposit boxes as negotiables more stable in time of crisis than many an engraved certificate. Dealers themselves confess their amazement at the soar of prices. The old bookseller, once the symbol of musty eccentricity, is now often a power in finance. Ernest Dressel North, in the preface to his 25th anniversary catalogue, points out that the price of a single book offered in that catalogue (a 1667 *Paradise Lost,* priced at $5500) exceeds the total of the prices of the 401 items listed in his first catalogue in 1902. And he adds, remarking on the prices lately paid for Shakespeare folios and Gutenberg Bibles, that perhaps in another twenty-five years only Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., will be able to afford such books. Dr. Rosenbach himself, who is slow to make predictions, suggests that $250,000 will be a modest price for a Gutenberg Bible ten years hence. None of us have forgotten how Mitchell Kennerley, two or three years ago, brought home the

Melk copy of the Gutenberg from England in two suit-cases—one volume in each case—and kept them in his cabin under his berth. It was the wisest thing to do. He would not even entrust them to the purser's safe, for he wanted to be able to grab them instantly in case of any sudden taking to the boats. So also did Colonel Isham, generously carrying some of the incredible richness of his Boswell MSS. to show to a sanhedrim of the Three Hours for Lunch Club, entrust them to a gruesome old wicker valise that looked only likely to contain a week-end wash. No one, in any horrid emergency, would have suspected such luggage of secreting anything notorious.—It was that copy of the Gutenberg Bible, incidentally, that Dr. Rosenbach bought for $106,000, and which is now at Yale University.

There will always be many to deplore so much discussion of these great memorabilia of human life in terms of price and trading; yet that sentimentality may easily become only an empty snobbery. Money after all is the only esperanto we have, the sole universal measure of our possessive passion for things that (for reasons of our own) are precious. And in the case of the perfect amorist, the paramour of print, he only thinks of the thing in terms of price before he has got it. Once acquired, the money phase is oddly irrelevant. It was only a few years ago that Dr. Rosenbach with characteristic humour gave tranquil Walnut Street in Philadelphia a considerable shock. He put a collection of Shakespeare folios and quartos in his show window with a small card stating that the price of the lot was $985,000. I cannot resist the

feeling that (except for the amusement it would have caused him) he would have been very unhappy if anyone had walked in, paid the price, and taken away the books. It would have been a sound investment, too, for anyone who could afford to tie up a million cash for a few years.

Perhaps it was because Dr. Rosenbach was born in Philadelphia in its great romantic year, the year of its famous Centennial in '76, that he was endowed with his miracle of book instinct. For, though the metaphor is not appropriate to his solid form, he is a willow-wand for the hidden springs of book lore. He is the Pied Piper of rare editions. He blows an airy wheedling note, and the old vellums and calfskins come trotting after him. They disappear into his twin Venusbergs—on Walnut Street or on Madison Avenue—and if he happens to take a fancy to keep them himself they are never heard of again. There is no one in the world rich enough to buy from Rosy anything that he thinks belongs on his own private shelves. There is no man more generous with his treasures, and no man who gets a finer sentimental pleasure out of the things he values for associations of their own. When he was only eighteen, still an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, he spotted the fact that a group of old pamphlets bound up together included the long-lost first edition of Dr. Johnson's famous Drury Lane Prologue. These, with beating heart, he bought for $3.60 in Stan Henkels' old auction-room in Philadelphia. And I think the most significant comment on Rosy's career is that a few years later, when he

needed money very badly, he refused an offer of $5000 for his treasure. The panting customer toiled after him in vain. He still has it.

There's a little scrap of paper in Rosy's private collection that brings you very close to some great and vanished things—into the very "shadow of a magnitude." It is a bill from the Mermaid Tavern. It was preserved in the family of the Goodyeares—Andrew Goodyeare was the host of the Mermaid in Shakespeare's time—and it gives you a pretty good notion of the sort of dinner you'd have had if you had dropped in to eat with Shakespeare and Drayton or Ben Jonson. When they spoke of "meat and drink" in those days, that's exactly what they meant. Vegetables, you'll observe, weren't on the menu at all.

The document—I believe it's never been published before, and so we are specially in Dr. Rosenbach's debt—goes like this:—

Visitation Dinner

1588
September
14
Superfine bread xi d.
Beer & ale xiiii d.
Wine ii s. xi d.
Sugar x d.
Boiled beef x d.
Roast beef v s.
Boiled mutton iii s. iiii d.
Capon v s.
Fire iiii d.
SUMMA xx s. iiii d.

ANDREW GOODYEARE.

Some of the items are not easy to decipher. I was a bit uncertain whether that "capon" might not have been "capers," for the proximity to Boiled Mutton certainly suggests caper sauce. The gorgeous thing about the whole menu is its extreme Britishness. Only add a cabbage or a brussels sprout and it might well be to-night's dinner at any Fleet Street ordinary.

There was a tradition (wasn't there?) that it was at a drinking bout with Drayton, Shakespeare contracted his fatal fever? But the Elizabethans died young not from too much drinking but from too much meat. Strange that such heavy diet bred—as Beaumont said of the "nobly wild" Mermaid evenings:

> "words that have been
> So nimble and so full of subtle flame
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life."

As one might expect from one who has risen so high in his own line, Dr. Rosenbach's book is full of good wisdom for the beginning collector, pointing out the very necessary fact that one does not have to begin with high-priced books. He is shrewd enough to know, though too modest to point out, that the great prizes in the collecting game will always go to those who have that queer specific instinct for which there is no counterfeit and no substitute. But the real fun, if you are a beginner in the collecting field, is to stake your own judgment. To choose

something in which you yourself believe—perhaps the work of some still unknown author. The "wild vicissitudes of taste" in this matter are part of the sport. I see, for instance, in a current catalogue, that H. M. Tomlinson's *The Sea and the Jungle,* which I bought for $1 in 1920, is now listed at $90. I haven't the faintest intention of selling my copy; but it is a pleasant confirmation of one's own judgment. Can any zigzagging of the stock market give one better fun than that? The kind of collecting that appeals to me is not chasing after things that everyone knows are great, but trying to hunt out the things that are going to be great ten or twenty years later. And this means, as Dr. Rosenbach points out, a lot of brooding over catalogues. He himself has a special marsupial overcoat, with a large pouch built in, to carry his brood of catalogues which he studies diligently as he rides to and fro between Philadelphia and New York.

Books and Bidders is so full of nourishing anecdote that I have made no attempt to cull any of its plums. Those who are interested in the comfortable folly of book-collecting will find them for themselves. But one thing should be said: that Dr. Rosenbach has an unerring instinct for knowing how a story should be told. He always begins with a vivid little "lead," as reporters say, that lures you into the narrative unawares. Like this—

"The *First Folio* had lain idly at anchor for two long, sultry days . . ."

"The gas lamps in Stan Henkels' auction-rooms were being extinguished . . ."

"It was a cold winter in my uncle Moses Polock's shop in Philadelphia . . ."

I'm sorry there's no manuscript of this book. If there were, I think I should go after it for my own collection.

GRANULES FROM AN HOURGLASS

IN THE enchanting little castellated town of Semur—a town so strongly fortified that one suspects there was originally some fifteenth-century irony in the motto they painted over their portcullis: *The people of Semur have much pleasure in making the acquaintance of Strangers*—there is an odd little curio shop that calls itself a *Bric à Brac*. The proprietor is a humorist, he displays the authentic jaw-bone of the ass that Samson used among other attractions in the window; and in his announcement he pokes fun at the other antiquaries of the town. This is his little merriment:

Dans ce Capharnaüm, se trouve: tout ce que le mauvais goût de plusieurs générations de Brocanteurs peut accumuler d'audace ridicule et d'insolente ignorance du Beau. Aussi ce n'est qu'un pauvre Bric à Brac et non un Antiquaire. Néanmoins, malgré ce mauvis goût et cette ignorance du Beau, les malins y découvrent q. q. fois des Occasions.

Beyond those ranges of the Côte d'Or, which look so like the Alleghanies, the old Clos de Vougeot monastery stands solitary like an island in a sea of vines. I had imagined that the fount and origin of one of the earth's most famous vintages would be a place humming with activity. But though the vines are there, the actual wine-

making is now done elsewhere, and the old press-room with its huge medieval appliances is dusty and dry. An elderly Norman woman, incredibly loquacious in a sing-song patois, delighted to talk about her native Cherbourg, acts as caretaker and is vigorously explanatory about the glories of the old building. It has been shamelessly restored within, evidently at grotesque expense. There is a dusty irony in the inscription on a little gravestone that stands among the rustling vines—

Ci-gît
Léonce Bocquet
1839-1913
Il restaura le château
Du Clos de Vougeot
Priez pour lui

He needs our prayers; for a fine old interior was gilded and gimcracked and furbished into a sorry absurdity. Here indeed is what the shrewd bricabracker of Semur would call an insolent ignorance of beauty.

Outwardly, however, this mysterious old house is impressive, and gives its just thrill to the respectful pilgrim of the grape. A solitary man with a horse was ploughing between the whispering rows of vines. The antique presses, with beams and levers as huge as the cranks of an old Cunarder, have not been tampered with. In that September sunshine, after a dubious summer, the year's vintage lay in the balance. If the warm weather continued, the harvest of 1927 might yet be of fine quality,

though only of moderate quantity. Loves and laughters and purple possibilities of the innumerable future seemed tremulous in the breezy ripple of the fields. A bush of pale roses was growing by the vineyard wall.

The village of Vosne-Romanée—home of the Romany Stain—was asleep in the afternoon glow. Here also we were surprised. Somehow I had prefigured a trellised bistro where the Caliph and I could taste a little young Romany in its native furrow: but the only estaminet was a hot indoor groggery emphasizing Bière des Grands Ducs, which did not seem part of the picture. We strolled about, peeping through boarded gates into walled gardens. A few men were working waist-deep in the rows of vines; great piles of grape-roots lay about the village, evidently for faggots.

It was just as well (one of the tragedies of life, I suppose, is that things so often are just as well) that we did not investigate the Beer of the Grand Dukes, for the hospitality of the Maison Chauvenet was waiting for us at Nuits. Every wine-lover knows the name of Chauvenet, which of course is not a vintage but a firm of wine-wholesalers. To put it in terms intelligible to bookmen, Chauvenet is the Baker and Taylor of Burgundy. I can wish you no better fortune than to arrive at Nuits-St.-Georges on a warm afternoon, thirsty with strolling and thinking, and be welcomed by M. Giboulot. And after a few beakers of St. Georges Tête de Cuvée, or Clos de Tart, or Pouilly-Fuissé, I think you will find yourself talking French better than you ever did before.

In Chauvenet's cellars we saw more than a million

bottles of wine—cellars ranged in two tiers, with pebbles underfoot to absorb excessive moisture. The temperature in those dark aisles of bottle-racks is about 50 degrees. In any business it is always the stock-room that interests me most, the place where the actual vendible merchandise is stored; and as we tottered in an ecstasy among the glassware, inhaling that deep, cool, groggy flavour, I could not help comparing this with the big stock-room of a large publishing house. The serious difference seems to be that in the wine business there are no "plugs"—no old stock left over unsalable. In the great Chauvenet *caves,* for instance, there is not a single bottle of any 1915 vintage still for sale. The oldest year they still have on offer is 1919. Lucky the publisher who could say the same of his printings.

M. Giboulot's card says that he is Fondé de Pouvoirs de la Maison F. Chauvenet, which I take to mean that he is the managerial or executive chief of the present staff—there are no longer any Chauvenets actively concerned in the business. As such, he speaks with authority, and I think I must quote textually from a charming letter which he afterward wrote me:

Je regrette toutefois que vous soyez resté si peu de temps car en dehors de la visite des caves, incontestablement intéréssante, les vignobles par leur variété retiennent l'attention et cela vous aurait donné l'occasion de voir avec quels soins et souvent quelles difficultés les vignerons s'efforcent de cultiver le sol pour en tirer les merveilleux vins que vous connaissez.

It faut espérer que vos compatriotes se rendront compte

un jour de l'erreur qui consiste à interdire toute boisson: comment peut on être gai et aimer à vivre sans boire de temps à autre quelques bonnes bouteilles d'excellents bourgognes?

La récolte actuelle qui s'annonçait merveilleusement bien vers le quinze Aôut a été légèrement compromise par suite des pluies abondantes qui sont intervenues depuis: heureusement les dégats ne sont pas graves et le beau temps qui a fait suite aux intempéries laisse espérer que la récolte sera de bonne qualité: toutefois la quantité ne era pas très grande et il est à craindre que les prix restent assez élevés.

It is good to be able to say that the wine business in Burgundy shows every sign of prosperity. I have often remarked to myself the interesting fact that some of the oldest traces of humanity's existence on this planet are found in the region of Bordeaux which is also a great wine country. Which shows that primitive man was not such a fool. Men and grapes very likely came into the world together, destined playmates. There was of course a certain melancholy in seeing a million bottles of wine very few of which one would ever meet in personal consummation. And yet even there one did not despair, for M. Giboulot pointed out with pride a very large shipment of several thousand cases which was being packed to go off to the Canadian Government. The boxes were stencilled to the Quebec Liquor Commission, Montreal; they were to leave Marseilles in September—they must be there by now.

There's a new tasting room at Chauvenet's, with a fine tall marble table. That is where the buyers come to

do their official degustation before placing their orders. The table is very high because the buyers drink standing up. It makes it easier to get away, when they have to. It's not always easy to get up from a chair, on a warm Burgundian afternoon.

DOMINION OVER EXPERIENCE

THE traffic in Fine Printing, books from private presses, rare issues of esteemed typographers, is as brisk and as technically specialized as stock-market trading. As purely hypothecary also—I hope that is the word I want: I mean that just as stock-market trading is often purely figmentary in its relation to the actual railroad or coal-mine mentioned, so is the lively business in modernistic printing quite irrelevant to the actual readability of the book. Like every other good thing, Fine Printing has its lunatic fringe. These Don Quixotes in elephant folio, bound in pale pork; these gruesome Troilus and Criseydes where Chaucer's fine manly text is haberdashered with frantic woodcuts of Hammersmith or East Aurora fancy, who would dream of using such grotesques for actual reading? We have been making merry, these recent years, over the simple gauds and galloons of the Naïve 'Nineties. I feel assured that the Nineteen Forties will have equal sport with our simplicities of to-day. The current frenzy for tony typography will give many an easing grin to our posteriors. For there is a phase of bookmaking that is not so much bibliophily as biliousness. The excellent Mr. Robert Ballou of Chicago uttered a stout protest some time ago, which he called "A Plea for Less Sophistication." Indeed, when we look over some

of the de luxe absurdities on the bookseller's counters we have eyes to wonder but lack tongues to praise.

But what I started to say was, it always interests me to see how definitely and shrewdly commercial is the Fine Printing racket. Its lingo has gone Stock Exchange: in reading the catalogue of some merry merchant of swell print I am often reminded of the bulletins of investment houses. There is talk of allotments, items that go to a premium, and diversified holdings. The issues of modernistic presses are described in much the same tone as the bonds of a new power plant. It is always well that any interesting business should have in it a strong infusion of bunk; otherwise there would be no fun in attempting to develop and exercise a faculty of choice.

How pleasant then, among items of luxury to come across a new number of the Hogarth Essays (edited by Leonard and Virginia Woolf) and to find that the latest of that series of strong pamphlets is *The Prospects of Literature* by the greatly admired Logan Pearsall Smith. Good indeed, in Mr. Edgar Wells's adventurous bookshop, to find that quiet well-printed little booklet and relish again the familiar cadence of the too-rarely-heard-from essayist. The L. P. S. devotees are not many, but they are of godly nurture. It is strong temptation to fill a column or so in quotation of Mr. Smith's essay. There is always such charm, such quality of thought in his temperate prose; something spare and hardy, clear-spirited and yet nimbly urbane. Yet it is not always well to give people what they should get for themselves. Mr. Edgar

Wells has the pamphlet for sixty cents, and any intelligent bookseller can procure it.

Pearsall Smith does not agree with Virginia Woolf that we, now, "are trembling on the verge of one of the great ages of English literature." He admits that we have many young writers of immense energy, candor, sincerity; that talent is surer than ever before of prompt recognition; that this is an age of endless palaver about books and hugely diffused literacy. But he files three interesting considerations in demurrer.

First, he says, in the great periods of literary creation there was always an underlying body of fairly unanimous ideas about life. Rightly or wrongly, there were coherent and generally accepted notions about destiny, morality, and all the other abstractions and concepts. Men had a formula, an agreed convention, a complete scheme of things, *"which gave them that imaginative dominion over experience which produces greatness."* (That, I think, deserves the italic.) This our present scrambled and broken and doubtful view of life rarely affords.

Second, he believes that for great literary creation we need an era when language is fresh, plastic, unhackneyed. Our idiom has been exploited almost to exhaustion, he thinks; it has lost its elasticity, its unconscious poetry; we are not linguistic innovators, we are content to parrot. Mr. Smith admits himself something of a faddist in this matter; and in this division of his argument I can't tally with him at all. In America at least it seems to me we have a lingo of lively fluidity,

subject to constant experiment and continually renewing itself by vulgar earthly contact.

Third, he is admirable on the damage done to literature as an art by easy ecumenical blab—

> The widespread interest in literature, the large reading public, the prompt recognition of merit, all these things are hardly as favourable as they might seem to the development of literary talent. Enduring excellence in any art is not at all a necessary result—it would seem indeed to be more like an accidental by-product—of artistic activity, and a general interest in the art, and enthusiasm for it, often tends, by making it fashionable, to hamper and impede, rather than to foster it. And is not this what is happening to-day? A large number of people who would do well to concern themselves with other things are now led by fashion to take an intelligent, or semi-intelligent, interest in new books; they form enthusiastic cliques, so eager to welcome and make notorious any novelty, that the clever young writer is able to attain recognition much too easily. Success is, indeed, as Trollope says somewhere, a necessary poison; but they are fortunate, he wisely adds, to whom it comes late in life and in small doses. . . . the number of miscarriages of talent, the rate of infant mortality among gifts of promise, seems to be ever increasing. And, indeed, with all the advertisement and premature publicity of our time, where can we hope to find that leisurely ripening of talent in the shade of obscurity, that slow development by experiment and failure, by which it can best be mellowed and matured?
>
> No; the old, hard conditions were surely better. It was much better to stone the prophets than to crown them, as we now crown them at once, with roses. They are stifled by the roses, but the stones in the old days of stoning only drove them out into the desert to meditate on their mission

and perfect their gifts, so that they might return at last to take their revenge on the world which had scorned them.

Mr. Smith continues his curve of thought just as charmingly as we would have expected. He finds his comfort in a line of Boileau—"Je trouve au coin d'un bois le mot qui m'avoit fui—." This creates for him "an enchanting picture of a special kind of lettered existence—the life of Horace at his Sabine farm, of Boileau in his garden at Auteuil, of Pope at Twickenham, of Gray in his college rooms at Cambridge." It is his serene and gently autumnal recommendation that we are to "shut ourselves away from hostile circumstance in some pleasant solitude; to search for the word one wants, and then to walk abroad and find it perhaps at the corner of a wood." And—forgive me—but I smile tenderly at Mr. Smith having chosen for his exemplaires Horaces and Popes and Santayanas, those suburban bachelors. His plea for Fame as a motive force, Fame in the true and best sense, does not require any apology. He feels it to be old-fashioned, but he states it with the high-minded grace we expect from his pen.

If I should ever seem to argue against anything said by Mr. Smith, it would obviously be due in part to that perverse reagent in the soul which compels one always to protest outwardly what one most privily and deeply cherishes. Pearsall Smith would not be the Pearsall Smith we swear by if he did not say just what he has said, and in that very accent. We all have our Boileau moments; we have our woodland corners, and have fought

hard for them. But with the best will in the world not all writers can be the studious Sabine squire. For some, their dominion over experience has got to be more hardly and dangerously attempted. Oh the relativity of all human testimony! Not only in the corner of the wood, but sometimes even in a subway train or at some jarring angle of Manhattan's terraced pride, the word can be found.

THE HADDOCK

IF THE train goes from Grand Central, there are two things one can do. One can stop in the office of the *Saturday Review* and borrow from the shelves of volumes not yet assigned to reviewers something that looks as if it might be amusing. Or you can halt at Liggett's Drug Store, in the same building as the station, and study the famous counters of publishers' "jobs." The latter course is always profitable: not only can you almost always find, among the wounded and slain of the publishing world, something of real merit; you can also observe the different policies of various publishers in regard to selling off their overstock. How rapidly do X and Company, if they find a book not "moving," pass it on to Mr. Liggett (whose private library, if he has a taste for collecting, should be excellent and acquired very reasonably). Whereas Y. Z. and Company hang onto their plugs more loyally, hoping faintly, perhaps, that some back-draught of fortune may yet plump those idly flapping sails. And no one has yet told, I suppose, the queer blend of feelings with which an author meets for the first time a pile of his own children on one of those counters. At any rate, he says to himself, it's in the 50-cent lot, not the 25.

On this occasion, however, it was in the *Saturday*

Review office that I gleaned my train-reading. What I had really hoped to find was Earl Derr Biggers' new novel—*The House Without a Key* I think it is called—for I know Mr. Biggers' spirited skill in mystery tales, and I believed it was just the sort of thing I needed. For the qualities desirable in train-reading are not easy to find. The flying world, striped like a ribbon beside you, makes the mind too uneasy for commercing with high sobrieties. Though I admit that I found Compton Leith's *Sirenica,* which I bought the other day in the beautiful Mosher edition in Mr. Mosher's own shop in Portland, perfect miracle for my travelling mood. But then few moderns have written as that book is written, almost in the deep tenderness of Sir Thomas Browne.—I could not help being pleased, by the way, when I at last had opportunity to make my often-imagined pilgrimage to Mr. Mosher's, that even the shops just across the street did not seem to know exactly where T. B. M.'s place was. This was so exactly as it should have been, for Mosher lived, I guess, little known to his neighbours; and few of them guessed that his little books, like the sailing ships of older time, had gone round the world with the name of Portland on their sterns.

But on this trip—and I write in the train, an indignity to which I have never before been reduced—I found myself with *This Quarter,* another of those expatriate Anglo-American reviews that keep bursting forth in foreign capitals. The two great Dioscuri whose spirits brood over this magazine, seem to be Ezra Pound and Brancusi. I do not mean that they are the editors: the

magazine starts its career by dedicating Volume I Number 1 to E. P. and reproducing nearly fifty of Brancusi's drawings and sculptures. I heartily approve of all intellectual magazines of this sort, as long as I can see them occasionally without having to pay for them. Whether large and unwieldy like the *Broom* or small and tight-stitched like *S 4 N* (I admit I am behind the times, for I think both these vanished some time ago) I always enjoy them; and they help to keep cheerful and busy a number of people gifted with terrific capabilities of melancholia. The way to keep a litterateur happy is to give him plenty of proofs (of his own writings, of course) to correct.

The one thing that *This Quarter* insists most upon is being fresh from the pan. It "pledges to its writers and audience to maintain its character as a periodical by presenting the artist in his latest mood. The editors of *This Quarter* realize that to a sensitive artist and to a critical audience a mood of yesterday is a painful thing. . . . Contributions will be paid for on acceptance. The editors especially urge donations to *This Quarter* of large sums to be awarded to contributors." On the whole I think I rather envy the kind of people who contribute to *This Quarter*. They are under no obligations to think out whatever notions are in their minds and try to make them intelligible. They don't even have to finish the job in hand, for several contributions are fragments "from Works Now in Progress." This is not to say that the experimentalists do not every now and then accomplish some astonishingly fine thing: I remember, for instance,

some of E. E. Cummings's poems a few years ago. But they don't seem able to tell the difference between intelligible beauty and Tristan Tzara's formula for writing a dadaist poem:—

Take a newspaper. Take a pair of shears. Choose an article in the newspaper of the length you wish to give to your poem. Cut out the article. Then cut out carefully each of the words in the article and put them all into a bag. Shake gently. Take out one cutting after another, and copy conscientiously as it leaves the bag. The poem will look like you: And there you are, an infinitely original writer with a charming sensibility, although still incomprehensible to the vulgar.

M. Tzara, I should say, is a humorous fellow who succeeded, for some time, in gulling the young Earnests of other movements. But even *This Quarter* admits that Dada is dead. A later excitement is Super-realism. Of this we learn that it expresses "the disinterested play of thought, without any æsthetic or moral preoccupation. It tends to ruin definitely all other psychical mechanisms, and to replace them in the solution of the principal problems of life. Vows of ABSOLUTE SUPER-REALISM have been pledged by MM. Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton—" etc., etc.

How useful, I am thinking, the dadaist formula would be at a time like the present; when, owing to a number of circumstances, I try to write a piece on the train. I should even be tempted to try it if I had a pair of scissors. The chief difficulty is that newspapers are printed

on both sides of the sheet; and suppose some irrelevant words got in? The greatest of poets, according to some modern theories, is the man who hitches together a string of Pullman cars.

It doesn't really matter very much: I don't mind what theories people pretend to believe about art as long as the result is thrilling and exciting. As the man said in Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday,* "who am I to quarrel with the wild fruits upon the tree of life?" What I really wanted to do to-day was write about the queer thrilling feeling of having been in Maine: of the clean stringent air, of those divinely pointed fir trees—which, I suppose, the New England church steeples imitated. I'd gladly fall back on any formula of "super-realism" that would help me, without taking the time and trouble of slow stupid brooding, to describe the sensation of some side-streets in Portland. In a lecture-hall at Bowdoin, where a celebration in honour of Hawthorne and Longfellow was going on, I could see, far away at the other end of the big room, a blaze of scarlet. As I was thinking about Hawthorne it seemed somehow oddly significant, but I was too short-sighted to make out just what it was. Afterwards I saw: it was the bright red dress of a charming little girl, a child as gay to look upon as Hester's daughter.

On one of the piers in Portland an old fish-monger told the legend of the queer markings on the haddock. Just abaft the fish's gills are two dark blotches, like bruises, one on each side. And from each of these marks runs a straight dark line back toward the tail. The haddock, said

this fisherman, was the fish with which Christ fed the multitude (though that sounds unlikely!). This so annoyed the devil that he tried to avenge himself on the species. He seized one, holding it tightly (hence the bruise-mark), but it slipped away. The Devil's finger-nails made the long scratches on each side; since when all haddocks carry that pattern. And beauty, in any art, I guess is just as elusive as that haddock. It can't be nabbed between the thumb and finger of any manifesto.

THOUGHTMARKS

IT IS dangerous to fix undue affection on any antique landmark in New York; when you have learned to love and understand it, suddenly it disappears. Henceforward I shall have to specialize more in thoughtmarks. The other day I went to show a man that old courtyard that opened off an alley in Ann Street. There was a dark smithy there, and a round brick building which (I've been told) was the original Astor fur-warehouse. The fur cap that old Johnjake was wearing when Walt Whitman saw him probably came from there. This little *cul de sac* was much esteemed by the Three Hours for Lunch Club; occasionally, in its rambles, the Visionary Committee of the club would prowl in there and concoct schemes for founding the Ann Street Country Club. The old raftered cellar, with its open hearths, and dark corners, would make the pleasantest chop house in New York, and very unlike our many Olde English chopping houses where visiting Englishmen feel themselves so hilariously ill at ease. Upstairs would be bedrooms, the quietest in the city, for Ann Street is all darkness and dream by dinner time; the cobbled yard would be sodded for a small bowling green; it would have been the last and loveliest shred of ancient Manhattan. But going there for another look, nothing remains but a quarry of rubbled

brick and stacked timbers. It is an ill thing to postpone one's dreams.

Well, I was making a little mental memorandum of the places in New York that I specially wanted to show a British visitor. There wasn't time to reconnoitre more than a few of them, because the legendary American hustle is sheer torpor compared with the agile haste of the Briton when he gets over here. Even if you do catch him for a few hours' leisurely sightseeing, he will be dodging into telephone booths every half hour to explain to someone why he will be late for the next appointment. But, for the benefit of other prowlers, I will tell you what I wanted him to see. First of all I intended him to lunch in the little unpublicitied chop house on Golden Hill (John Street) which (whatever Boston may demur) is I believe just about the place where the first rumpus occurred in the Revolution. We weren't going to eat a very heavy lunch, though, because afterward I was planning to rush him up to Morningside to have a stack of buckwheat cakes in some restaurant as near as possible to Barnard College. This because I have always been told that Barnard is built on the site of a buckwheat field where the Battle of Harlem Heights was conducted. It was a successful "attack on the flank," the history books say; and so are buckwheat cakes. After this we would go along Riverside Drive and I would point out the curious adjacent contrast of the two most notable tombs in New York—those of General Grant and of the Amiable Child. Then, from the depth of Morningside Park, beside the delightful statue of the bear and the

faun, we would look up at Gutzon Borglum's angel on the roof of the cathedral.

This suggests another upward gaze I'm fond of; we would hasten downtown again to Vesey Street, and ascending to the balcony on the tenth floor of the former *Evening Post* building we'd admire Mrs. Batchelder's golden triumph on the roof of the Telephone Company. There has always been some argument as to the exactly correct name of this statute: I have heard it stated as "The Spirit of Electricity"; but I believe it symbolizes the gallant exultation of the human mind on having put in its nickel and got the right number. In St. Paul's Church, below, I would call my Briton's attention to George Washington's prayer for the American people: that they should "cultivate a spirit of subordination." He would reply, in fact did, that if they had done so there wouldn't have been any United States.

I should have taken him, but forgot while we were uptown, to the Schuyler Arms apartment house on 98th Street; I love it because I lived there for a while and also because (according to Mr. Fremont Rider's *New York City*) it is just about there that the Woodman spared That Tree and touched not a single bough. Instead, we would go to Schulte's: the bookstore, not the tobacconist, in that stretch of Fourth Avenue among so many other delightful bookshops. We would go to Schulte's because (I will make a confession) although Roger Mifflin's Haunted Bookshop was supposed to be in Brooklyn, its author actually was thinking of the darkling and savoury piled-up alcoves of Schulte's. Mr. Mifflin's place was

really a sort of morganatic offspring of an uncanonized union of Schulte's on Fourth Avenue and Niel Morrow Ladd's in Brooklyn.

People who are coming to New York sometimes write to ask (and by the way, Anatole France wasn't the first writer to keep his unanswered letters in the bathtub; De Quincey used to do the same thing) where is the real bohemia. They are growing suspicious of the somewhat determined bohemianism of Greenwich Village or of Longacre. Of course every generation, every profession, has its own bohemia; bohemia is wherever you happen to be having a good time; but the place that comes nearest to my notion of what that mythical coast should look like is the old saloon on Seventh Street near the Cooper Union. It was John Sloan's drawing of it, in *Harper's Weekly* (in October, 1913) and an article by Hutchins Hapgood, that first sent me there; it is a fine old Tammany-flavoured sanctum, with Niblo's Garden playbills and that genteel air of literature and politics and sentiment that belongs to an honest saloon. I suppose the youngest generation doesn't know it at all; it is the house's pride that no woman has ever been admitted, probably it is the last place in New York where the bartender would be thoroughly scandalized if a female appeared. Bill McSorley, succeeding his father, has been behind that bar for fifty years and the house still obeys the law as it always has. A mug of one-half of one per cent at McSorley's tastes better than chemical Scotch in the surreptitious dens of the Forties.

I suppose that nowadays no enterprise can be success-

ful without admitting the ladies. There must be some profound reason, for example, for the carvings of Aphrodite over the Cunard, White Star, and French Line piers on the North River. And when McSorley's familiar signboard—*"The Old House at Home"*—fell down a few months ago, perhaps that was an omen of future change. But even if Bill someday turns it into an eating-place, and admits ladies, let us have, complete down to the yellowest playbill, the authentic sliced onion, and the painting of Moonlight on the Wabash, our loved McSorley's, last toll-gate on the Bohemian frontier.

The last item on my brief memo was to show the visitor Barry Faulkner's murals in the lobby of the Washington Irving High School. Among them is a lovely map of Long Island, the pleasantest conspectus of that region (I wish it might be reproduced on a coloured postcard for the use of Paumanokers) and this suggested a final foray for the touring Briton. He is a Whitman enthusiast, and had been rather depressed by Walt's house in Camden which is surrounded by a dingy soot-blown slum. So it seemed agreeable, in the long sunset of a transparent June evening, after a skirmish out to Lloyd's Neck where that fine old colonial mansion stands in a blue tissue of shadows above the salty lagoon, to run Dean Swift through the forests of West Hills to Walt's birthplace. The little ochre cottage—"pumpkin-coloured," the visitor insisted—was surrounded by a wide freshness and a soft supper-time pause. Alongside a main road, and with a realtor's development (called "Dreamland") near by, and a ganglion of hot doggeries on the pike a few

rods distant, it won't preserve much longer its magical feeling of solitary blessing. But it does still put one's sentiments about Walt into a gracious perspective. "And see," we exclaimed, for we wanted our friend to know that America respects its authors, "there's another American writer celebrated just across the road." We pointed to a large brilliant billboard that faces the Whitman cottage. "Surely that isn't how he spelled it," protested our guest.

The sign says *"Oh Henry!"*

THREE FRIENDS

I. ALPHA AND BETA

ALPHA: What an old darling Gamma is! He's so gorgeously genuine. Everything he does and says is perfectly characteristic of him, no one else would ever behave quite that way.

BETA: Yes, even the queer twirly hat is part of himself; and the way he sits on the edge of a chair, puts his hands on his knees and starts telling you something. His comic old face begins to shine with excitement, he rocks to and fro on his hams and bursts into screams of laughter——

ALPHA: He gets sort of fits when suddenly the grotesque comedy of everything bursts open inside him: gosh, if you could get a portrait of him like that, the wild doglike frenzy in his eyes, the perspiration bubbling on laughter——

BETA: There wasn't any artist ever lived could quite catch him. But then take him when he's grave, something's gone wrong, maybe you tell him about some mess you've got into, that really lovely *concern* that comes into his voice. You just know the old rascal would quit whatever he was doing and come to the rescue.

ALPHA: I like to imagine him riding in the subway, grinning a little to himself over some absurd notion that's hit him.

BETA: He's always so quaintly polite among people he doesn't know; and underneath it you can see him sizing them up and either laughing or cursing inside. I love to see his old mind buzzing away.

ALPHA: Did you ever see him with women? Charmingly deferential, they love it.

BETA: Surely no woman could ever *get* him; that particular essence and virtue of his is too subtle for 'em; besides it needs a special kind of rather profane conversation to bring him out at his best——

ALPHA: I know some women who'd get him. Not many, but—well, two or three.

BETA: Hmm. I'm not so sure. Lord, don't let's talk about him: it makes me sore because I can't see him oftener. I just worship the old fool.—That heavenly simplicity of his, combined with such roaring sense of farce. He's a kind of child. That's why women can't possibly appreciate him. Did you ever know a woman who understood children?

ALPHA: You've put your finger on it. That's it, exactly. He has the mind of a child.

II. BETA AND GAMMA

BETA: I saw Alpha the other day. He was asking after you.

GAMMA: Good old Alf! He's a grand bird.

BETA: He's one of the few men I know you can say what you think to; and he won't hold it against you.

GAMMA: I like his ups and downs; he gets so comically

depressed sometimes; you can't get a word out of him; then suddenly he comes through with some really terrific remark.

BETA: I wish I could spy on him when he's alone; I'll bet he's enormously comic, without knowing it.

GAMMA: It wouldn't be safe to spy on *anyone* when he's alone. We all manage to conceal our absurdities, to some extent. Thank God, even *you* don't know, old horse, what a fool I am.

BETA: One reason why Alf gets down sometimes is, he's so gruesomely honest. I mean, he really does try, if you give him half a chance, to say what he thinks about things. Poor fish, he's an idealist, that's why he's so bawdy sometimes.

GAMMA: The thing I like about him, you have a feeling that his mind really works: he carries a tremendous lot of stuff in solution up there in the dome, all kinds of queer stuff, carnal and spiritual.

BETA: Carnal, yes. "He thinks too much; such men are dangerous."

GAMMA: I wonder if women fall for him?

BETA: They would, if he gave 'em a chance. He doesn't if he can help it.

GAMMA: I doubt it. He'd want to tell 'em what he was really thinking; either it would be too rarefied, and frighten 'em, or too lewd, and——

BETA: For heaven't sake don't talk about Women as though there was one rule that applies to 'em all——

GAMMA: Well, isn't there? Be respectful to them and they'll never bother you. Old Alf isn't respectful enough,

that's why he has to avoid 'em. He's too damned straightforward.

BETA: Oh, he has his own line of hokum too, to act as a smoke-screen.

GAMMA: Naturally. Bless his old heart, I love to see him buzzing along, trying to do a hundred things at once and cackling at himself now and then. Let's get hold of him for lunch one of these days. I want to hear about some of the comic things he's been hiding in his head. Behind all his racket he's as simple as a kid.

BETA: You know, that's just it. He has the mind of a child.

III. GAMMA AND ALPHA

GAMMA: Hello, old kid.

ALPHA: Why the deuce don't you give a fellow a ring once in a while? I ran into Beta the other day, we were saying let's the three of us have lunch and chew the rag a bit.

GAMMA: He's put over that deal with the movies, did you hear?

ALPHA: Yes, it's fine. I hope he'll hang onto the kale now he's got some; he's an unsuspicious old ass, it'd be just like him to let someone get most of it away from him.

GAMMA: He's an oddity all right: he and I were chinning about something or other, all the time I kept thinking what a really marvellous curiosity he is. You know that shy way he looks at you and then looks away, as though he's afraid you'd tell him you like him?

ALPHA: Yes, and just before he slides away he puts his hand on your shoulder, sort of gets it across by that gesture that he loves you. I don't care for that sort of thing usually, but with him it seems just right.

GAMMA: What he likes best is a good old twosome, to sit down quietly somewhere and unload himself gradually. You can't hurry him, and when there are several people he shuts down like a bivalve. But my word, if he gets well started he has some queer stuff to say; some devilish queer stuff.

ALPHA: After I left him the other day I did something *he'd* never do: I turned and watched him down the street. I always enjoy that fine straight back of his, his excellent clothes, and his genius for completely effacing himself in a crowd. No one would ever suspect how cunningly he's observing everything——

GAMMA: And how the old rogue blossoms when he's with people who understand, people he trusts! That bashful boyish solemnity that conceals so much fine wit. Don't you relish his grin? But it always seems turned inward, somehow; as though he was saving part of what he's thinking to mull over afterward.

ALPHA: I suppose we all are; that's the worst of it.

GAMMA: Every now and then something he says comes back to me long afterward; I remember vaguely some yarn of his about a girl he fell for very hard——

ALPHA: He doesn't talk much about women; and I'll say one thing, I never heard him pull any smoking-car stories.

GAMMA: That's a pretty good sign that he understands

their ways. There's something about the cut of his mouth——

ALPHA: I think he's too thoughtful, really, to appeal to them.

GAMMA: Thoughtful? Why that's just what they love.

ALPHA: Yes, maybe, but that loveliest part of old B., the pure boyishness of him, they could never relish. It doesn't emerge often, he's too cautious, been battered too hard; but when it comes, he's perfect.

GAMMA: The patient old thing: how quietly he goes about his doings, simmering inside! And full of the most violent naïve dreams. By gosh, he has the mind of a child.

BLUE SILK

I

FANTASY is fashionable nowadays: they're all writing Just Not So stories. Some of the most determined and resolute fantasies you ever saw are being put out: the author doesn't intend that there shall be any doubt about its being a fantasy. And since the Decline and Fall of the Algonquin Empire there is a delightful state of uncertainty among many Young Malleables as to what really is or isn't to be praised. There is no longer, for the moment, any woolsack of Authority. Henry Mencken made a brilliant bid for the Papacy; but he had ridiculed Dictators so long that his young dragoons are likely to get out of hand. I was delighted, loitering in the Grand Central Station the other day and watching the people get aboard various limited trains (The Wolverine, the Lake Shore Limited, the Merchants', the Gilt Edge Express) to see the different reading matters. Wolverine passengers were likely to carry a McFadden "book" (by which they meant magazine); but the bulky young raccoons and possums going back to New Haven and Boston had mostly *Mercuries*. However, *non possumus omnes* I reflected. A few years ago it would have been the *Atlantic* that one saw on the Gilt Edge Express. It is these

little shifts and veerings in the vogue that make life entertaining to the student.

Landsmen don't pay much attention to the weather. The citizen can rarely tell you what quarter the wind exhales, or how the glass is moving. But put him adrift at sea, or even on Long Island Sound, Lord how carefully he studies the clouds and marks his barograph. So is it with literary climate. Publishers, whose lives depend on these matters, very shrewdly con the sky.

But I'll tell you a secret. When you're perfectly sure a thing's a fantasy, it isn't. And what I had in mind to say was, I wish more of our fantasy writers had the Stella Benson touch. I have learned, I suppose, that it is no use to tell people about Miss Benson's beautiful books; there is some mystery in the universe which prevents them from reaching those who need them. Yet I keep on hoping, for Stella Benson is so perfectly what many other people are advertised as being, but aren't. It is modish lately to deplore Mr. Michael Arlen: the intelligentsia have not forgiven him for becoming popular; and worse, cannot forgive him for playing their own game so much more skilfully and cynically than they know how. So the sophisticates have all leaped out of the window of the Arlen boom, crying that they did it for Purity. But I am still simple enough to admire Mr. Arlen as the extraordinarily able and ungulled humorist that he is; and perhaps I admire him most of all because when we met we found ourselves instantly at one; not merely in our affection for Mr. Arlen, but (more important) in our admiration for Stella Benson. If Mr. Arlen really wants

to do a good turn, I wish he would somewhere put down in ink his tribute to her elfin glory. A man can write as many *Green Hats* as he likes: if he admires Miss Benson that is all I ask of anyone.

For Miss Benson seems to me the perfectly civilized writer. In her new book, *The Little World,* perhaps livelier than elsewhere I Stella's image see. For it is when writing about real things, even more than in her intended fantasticoes, that she is in finest and tenderest fancy. There are no signboards in her pages telling you exactly when she is going to begin to be jocund. She is in no danger from the licentious peasantry of the literary countryside (I quote from a delicious anecdote of her own) because the average hoodlum reader would never suspect the glamour of those small, carefully muffled enchanted books. She is as good company as only a melancholy person can be: and as Mr. Disraeli remarked in his *Calamities and Quarrels of Literature,* those are the only justly frolic companions. She is, unless your ear is very dainty, almost inaudible. How few authors are that. As she says of Woman before she got the vote, her life has been "one long obstacle race owing to the anxiety of man to put pedestals at her feet. While she was falling over the pedestals she was soothingly told that she must occupy a Place Apart—and indeed, so far Apart did her place prove to be that it was practically out of earshot."

A French theatrical manager was writing to an American playwright to explain, sadly, that the American's play, produced in Paris, had not been successful. "I regret to inform you that after the excellent reception of the dress

rehearsal the public postponed coming after the very first performance." That was an immortal delicacy. The public has too long postponed coming to Miss Benson's books. *The Little World,* which is a fantasy of the right sort, is a book of travel, where you see our dear and actual planet minified on the retina of a marvellously clear and anxious eye. I suppose Miss Benson will be surprised to find herself mentioned along with another Young Visiter; but these sketches remind me of the Kipling of 1887 or thereabouts. There is the malice, the charm, the wit; and something more too, which Kipling was then too young to have. Coventry Patmore used to advise young poets to live on the interest, rather than on the capital, of passion; an extraordinarily shrewd advice. Miss Benson, in writing of her travels, lives on the imaginative percentages of her observation, not squandering the lump sum of her experience. So must every true fantasist. If you will read her account of a journey across the United States with a Ford car and a husband who had a monocle, you will see what I mean. Well, perhaps you will; perhaps you won't. At any rate read the first piece in *The Little World,* the piece called "Trippers," and see what fantasy is.

It made me happy the other day, in a Long Island train, to see a long thin publisher, smoking a long thin cigar, reading a manuscript of a life of Walt Whitman. He was reading it with glee and called out to me, as I passed him in the smoker, "Gosh this is fine, isn't it?" (He knew that I had already read that MS.) And I was thinking, as I sat down, of Walt's own question about

the poet: Will the future make detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Any motorist on Long Island can tell you that it has been done for Walt. Well, some day, when you have stopped at the fashionable roadhouses of literature, try turning off on a small but exquisitely rewarding byway. Try *The Little World* or *Pipers and a Dancer* or *This Is the End.* But even if no one goes with me, I am proud when I can make this detour, for Stella Benson's sake.

II

THERE are always excellent reasons for silence. One worthy reason is that you have nothing to say. Another is that what you are thinking is too important to be said, or would become untrue if uttered.

The recourse of those who feel they have something to say, but desire to avoid the bitterness of being understood, has been (ever since Æsop) the fable or fantasy. The importance of any fable can be gauged by the area of silence it covers. Abraham Lincoln, a very Æsopian person, could conceal the whole blackness of Civil War in an anecdote.

I have been reproached, and I think justly, for having praised some distant fabulists to the neglect of those nearer home. Therefore, to avoid the capital charge of seeming disinterested, I want to say a word about a book by a great poet whose work I have long admired; but—as George Moore said to Dick Le Gallienne when the latter vented his enthusiasm—"Very charming of you, my dear Richard; but why not in one of the newspapers?"

I don't believe that any writer can read Elinor Wylie's *The Venetian Glass Nephew* without wanting to communicate with the papers. Hawthorne would have wanted to; and the author of *Undine* would have wanted to; and Stevenson would have written to Colvin about it. It makes me want to visit again that museum of glass flowers I once saw at Harvard. It is as beautiful and fragile as they. It is a small terrible thing, exquisitely done. I am told that it is less important than Mrs. Wylie's *Jennifer Lorn,* but I wonder. I have always admired Elinor Wylie's poetry so much that I had been fearful of meeting her in fiction. Her poetry has so perfectly the distilled merits of fine prose (some will misunderstand this, but not she)—its clear Roman nonchalance, its instant transfusion into the mind—that I was scared about her conduct in a novel. Here, I feared, her pent profusion would coagulate. I was wrong.

"Beneath brocaded petticoats," Mrs. Wylie says of her young Rosalba, "the child's silk stockings, though gossamer and clocked with lace, were already obstinately blue." This was undoubtedly the fault of Caterina, Rosalba's mother, who had worn blue garters on a dangerous occasion. But the point is that for Mrs. Wylie the blue always begins in the hosiery. She is of the salon, and has the malicious brevity of all her great sisters, whether from Versailles or Hampshire. There is not a line in this fable to show it wasn't written a hundred years ago; nor will there be a hundred years hence. The friend who persuaded me to read the book said "You can finish it in two hours." How she underrated me. I have spent the

better parts of two days in reconning its delicious felicities. Only once, in its precious 182 pages, do I find what seems the wrong word. *Glabrous,* I insist, is not correct (p. 138) for the tear that passed down Carlo's leather cheek. The cheek itself, glabrous perhaps; not the tear.

The Venetian Glass Nephew is a fantasy so tenderly ironic that it will probably escape the death-knell of unluckier fantasies, the insistent demand to know "what it means." The spun-glass Nephew will "mean" something less to the casual commuter than (for instance) to Abélard and Héloïse, who would have read aloud this queer spiral of their own disaster, and gazed in wild surmise. Another, seeing the flash of blue silk, will account it a most merry essay on Papal nepotism; or a frolic margin on the crimson folio of a certain chevalier. You may read into its rather terrible climax, where fire is purged with fire and pity makes "its intolerable demands," rather more than the author vouches. This is not sentimental fantasy, like James Stephens; nor witty fantasy, like Stella Benson. It is ironical fantasy; the fantasy of despair. Only a great poet could have restrained that noiseless and wicked humour from quickening into audible satire. Blown of molten sand, this bubbly lustre is informed with tragic breath. But we are not pelted with burrs: the wind moves softly over the hill carrying thistledown.

I saw the other day a copy of *Comus* which once belonged to Mr. Alexander Pope. Mr. Pope, in his neat caslonesque hand, had written in a number of comments. I cannot quote exactly, but the gist of his memo

on Comus was "There are some interesting lines in this masque with a number of lively figures." What Mr. Pope said in public may have been much more quotable by Milton's publisher; but that was his private and confirmed settlement. So is it possible for even the coolest critic (and Pope was himself something of a Venetian Glass Nephew) to underrate noble extravagances.

But I don't think it is underrating the *Nephew* to say that it is a perfect work of art; and carrying the burdens that any perfection must bear. It is so adorably tiny, well-disciplined, iridescent: a tear-bottle, a Prince Rupert's drop, a Borgia ring. It must bear the gravest burden of all, of requiring for the most part a reader capable of it. The poet who wrote "Bronze Trumpets and Sea-Water" (if you know your *"Nets to Catch the Wind"*) is aware of the limitations of subtlety. She knows that California orchardists do not mention the arsenic in the peach-pit; and that many customers, like Virginio and Rosalba, will "hurry to a fashionable pastrycook's to eat whipped cream and wafers." But her gay and *méchant* fable, glazed and twinkling like an agnostic's Christmas tree, should outlive many more urgent things; a crystal microcosm, arousing "pity and its intolerable demands." It is always the most breakable things that we try hardest to safeguard against being broken; and I consign this darling trifle toward the future, marked *Fragile: With Care.*

A GEOMETRY NOTEBOOK

THE notebook, bound in blue-green speckled boards, begins boldly enough. *Modern Geometry,* it says; *Preliminary Propositions;* and these first pages, written in a vigorous black ink, precisely suggest the somewhat vacillating scholar who has determined to make a fresh start and do justice to the subject. The little diagrams are smartly drawn, and we feel that if he goes on like this none of the mysteries of triangles and circles will be hidden from this young geometer. "If from any point or no of points," he confides, "pairs of tangents be drawn to a circle: the chords of contact all pass through the same point." He proceeds to "Pascal's Hexagon" and "Brianchon's Theorem"; plunges into the charms of conic sections. "The parabola is symetrical with respect to the axis," he remarks; but he was never a talented speller. Some pages have been torn out, but apparently he goes on with unabated zeal as far as Proposition X. There we find signs of wavering. Some trial rhymes are jotted in pencil at the top of the page. *Cram, flam, Abraham, whim-wham, tram, clam*—not a very promising assortment. There, at Proposition X, the muse overtakes him. The two chords intersecting in a parabola, and their ratios to other parallel chords, are rushed through

to the hastiest Q. E. D. The student had been intersected by chords of a different sort. The pen and ink are abandoned; enters the pencil, the pencil that makes this notebook precious still:—

> I like a pipe discreetly lit,
> A bottle wreathed in cobwebries,
> A random interchange of wit,
> A café window whence one sees—

Then you turn back and look again at the cover of the notebook. You guess now the meaning of that clear circular impression. It is not just a geometrical figure. No, something hot and wet has rested there—a large glass of toddy, perhaps, such as might console an undergraduate in a snell climate, coming out from a lecture-room.

The muse having interrupted Euclid, has it all her own way for several pages. I copy down, exactly as they are pencilled on the pages, some extracts from these jottings. How divinely youthful they are!

> With liberal hand, in life's bright morning hour,
> God crowned my head with hopes and visions high.
> Flower after flower I plucked them, flower by flower
> Spoiled their bright leaves and, careless, threw them by.
> Gone are these fair old dreams; gone, one by one,
> As one by one the hope to attain them died. . . .

Whether these bright nosegays, plucked and then abandoned, were symbolic of the exercises in plane geometry,

one knows not. But the young dreamer is assiduous enough at his own concerns:—

> Such hopes alas! demand no slight
> Or trivial exercise of might
> My candle goes not out by night
> And many a time
> I work into the morning light
> To find a rhyme.
> I labour harder at my trade,
> Line upon line discreetly laid
> The *filum* travelling grade by grade
> From verse to verse,
> Than Adam laboured with his spade
> After the curse.

This pertinacity was not always rewarded, though. On the next page we find:—

> My muse is out of voice to-night;
> Her high notes do not sound
> And begs

But after these false starts she clears her throat with a fine bravado:—

> Here, learned sir's an exercise
> To take to pieces and revise,
> Come shake your beard and clear your eyes
> And clean the table,
> By God! my lines shall take the prize
> If I am able.

This lively outburst, and some memoranda of projected short stories, evidently operated as a relieving catharsis, for the notebook now resumes the neglected mathematics. There are several pages, handsomely done, dealing with Arithmetical Means and Induction. "To find the sum of the squares of the natural nos" is neatly worked out, but then reappear the numbers that were even more natural to this young wayfarer. The next scribblings, apparently suggested by a before-sunrise ramble with a companion, include these lines:—

First to the Forward-looker sing
A pæan—royally a King
  And manfully a man;
Crafty and strong was he—he knew
How, buffeted and thwarted, grew
The sickly life of mankind thro'
  God's plan.

There follows a cash account of a Class Dinner Club, of which our hero was treasurer. Then, as the middle pages of the book are still blank, we turn to the other end and go backward.

We start there with a page of what one suspects to be notes on philosophy lectures.

Ontological Utilitarianism,
eternal verity—Platonist

is the first entry, phrases of the kind particularly enchanting to youthful taste. I like also the following:—

6th sense (moral sense)
Moral sense-faculty tend to produce happiness
Benevolence criterion
Faculty-reason
Criterion—congruity between agent & actor

A seasoned philosopher could write quite a sizable essay based on those notations. Then we have a page of trigonometry formulæ, carried over from the other end of the book, some more geometry problems, and extracts from codes of Roman law. But at this end of the book poetry has the best of it. There are rough drafts of a long poem in honour of Saint Valentine, very characteristic of all high-spirited rhymers at this age:—

With hopeful faces, now we sight
(A month or so in front) the sun
In the next springtime shining bright,
And know the year is rebegun.
So come & snap the castanettes
And gaily lead the dance adown
Away with reasons! . . .

Happy who are not gravely wise
But wear the motley next their skin
And shake their bells in grandam Grundy's eyes
Motley I count the only wear
That suits in this mixed world the truly wise,
The wise who smile upon despair. . . .

We do not now parade our 'oughts'
And 'shoulds' and motives and beliefs in God.
Within we hold the wake for hopes deceased;

But in the public streets, in wind or sun,
Keep open, at the annual feast,
The puppet-booth of fun.

Our puns, perhaps, are small to please
But even negro-songs and castanettes
Old jokes and hackneyed repartees
Are more than the parade of vain regrets.
Let Jaques stand Wertering by the wounded deer
We shall make merry, honest friends of mine,
At this unruly time of year,
The Feast of Valentine.

Priest, I am none of thine and see
In the perspective of still hopeful youth
That truth shall triumph over thee,
Truth to oneself—I know no other truth.
I see strange days for thee and thine, O priest,
And how your doctrines, fallen one by one,
Shall furnish, at the annual feast,
The puppet-booth of fun.

Even if you didn't know whose notebook this was, (in his twentieth year) there are two entries that identify it. There is the page where he draws up the scheme of a book of tales (*A Convenanting Story-Book* he entitles it) in which there occur several titles that he actually used later on, and one that became one of his masterpieces. And in the list of members who had paid their five-shilling dues to the Class Dinner Club his own name is set down. There you will find it, at the bottom of the list—R. L. Stevenson.

I doubt if there is any more charming souvenir of

that lean, brown-eyed, spindle-shanked undergraduate. How zealously he set about his geometry theorems, in ambitious black ink; how inevitably the tinkering pencil of the muse kept interrupting! The little notebook must have been dear to the Tusitala, or he wouldn't have kept it through so many years and wanderings. Some of the scribblings in it have been reprinted in the New Poems issued not long ago. As verse these rhymings are not important; what is much more so is to see that he really worked hard at his geometry.

By the generosity of Mr. Gabriel Wells, the Notebook is now in the library of Haverford College.

A NOTE ON GEORGE GISSING

IT IS a particular pleasure to see George Gissing's *New Grub Street* put back into print, in the frugal and legible format of the Modern Library, with Harry Hansen's sagacious little introduction. The Modern Library, by alert editorial supervision, has become associated—even in its curious linoleum smell—with things genuinely worth reading; it has long since outgrown the somewhat jejune Dowsonism of its beginning; in those dark 'teens of Greenwich Village all cats were Dorian gray. I am sorry, though, that the merchandising spirit who wrote the packet-copy for this new edition thought it necessary to step up the voltage of Mr. Hansen's very temperate remarks. Where Mr. Hansen in his introduction speaks of Gissing as "a capable stylist," the jacket transposes it to "a stylist second to none." This of course is absurd; except in occasional adsutures of *pannus purpureus* Gissing was hardly a "stylist" at all—in his novels, at least. And this was due not merely to the monotony of grimness in which he wrote, the dogged weariness with which he ploughed through the statutory three volumes; it was due also to a certain chosen dryness of temperament. Such passages as the Athenian sunset in *New Grub Street* are very rare. In *Ryecroft* and in *By*

the Ionian Sea, books written not for drudgery but for delight, Gissing allowed himself more gamut.

New Grub Street, of course, is a book so well worth reading that one is cautious against over-recommending it. It is full of Gissing's special virtues of sober, gainly, competent narrative; the admirable treatment of dialogue; the fine, dull, conscientious, workmanlike efficacy. So rarely, so very rarely, does he ignite into a real flash—as for instance his admirable irony in calling the chapter where Reardon dies, "Reardon Becomes Practical." Sometimes he has lapses of really deplorable fatigue or sloth: as where, by giving one chapter a clumsy label he deprives the reader of all suspense in a critical turn of his plot. It is a book that gives the layman a very painful and disillusioning picture of the world of publishing and reviewing. Whether it was quite fair toward the London of the '80's I cannot say: Mr. Hansen judiciously points out that the very moment when Gissing's bitter novel was published (1891) was the time when so many fine things were feathering in more fortunate quills. Beaded bubbles were winking at the brim of many a rich purple-stained ink-well. But I think that any honest pilgrim of the Grub Street of to-day must confess that even at their worst, in the publishing world we have known, things have never been quite as sordid as Gissing suggests.

If one wanted something to brood about, he might ask himself just why it is that George Gissing's books cast such a peculiar spell over their devotees. Upon me, at any rate, that spell is just as efficacious in his less successful works as it is in the radiant and universally admitted

charm of *Ryecroft*. The recent—somewhat tentative—revival of interest in Gissing afflicted hardened Gissingers with a queer dilation of amazement. For the Gissing toxin is of that specially subtle kind that each inoculate wonders in his private skull what anyone else could find relishable in books so mournful, prosy, and ironic. If anything on earth is unfashionable just now it is the particular kind of technique that Gissing employed in fiction. Yet, if I have to testify, I must admit that at no time in the last ten years have I ever visited a second-hand bookshop without keeping an eye open for his books.

And when, the other day, I found *The Odd Women* (first edition, three volumes, 1893) at Alfred Goldsmith's on Lexington Avenue, I was particularly pleased. This was one of Gissing's I had never read, and I had always heard of it as one of his most depressing. It is a humiliating confession, I suppose: beginning the book in a low mood I found myself progressively more cheerful. There is something so complete in the griefs which Gissing unloads upon the six sisters of his tale that I admit I ended in excellent spirits.

This sounds so heartless that I must justify myself by some synopsis of the story. It begins by Dr. Madden remarking to his eldest daughter that "To-morrow I shall take steps to insure my life for a thousand pounds." Dr. Madden, a country physician in his fiftieth year, has everything to live for. But the experienced student of fiction knows, from that very first sentence, that nothing can save him. He is doomed. He should have taken out that insurance long ago. The happy little carefree tea-party in

the opening chapter, when the doctor reads The Lotos Eaters aloud to his girls, cannot fool us for a moment. Sure enough, that very evening he is thrown out of his dog-cart, and by page 16 he is dead. The mother of the six girls had already been "resting in the old churchyard" for two years. So now we follow the fortunes of the daughters.

Between pages 16 and 17, fifteen years pass by, so that already, in the second chapter, the Madden girls know that they're in for it. Alice, the oldest, has a job as a governess at £16 a year. She has "brown hair, but very little of it." Worse still (she is now thirty-five) she "tended to corpulence; she had round shoulders and very short legs." Her complexion was "spoilt," her cheeks were loose and puffy, her forehead generally had a few pimples. She walked with a quick ungainly movement as if seeking to escape from someone.

Virginia (33) is a "lady's companion" at £12 a year. She also looks unhealthy, her lips are "lax," and wrinkles are "extending their network." She had undermined her constitution by excessive study of ecclesiastical history. Her out-of-doors dress was now in its third summer, poor soul. But her creator does have the heart to relent a little: "She could not have been judged anything but a lady. She wore her garments as only a lady can (the position and movement of the arms has much to do with this), and had the step never to be acquired by a person of vulgar instincts." But alas, even while she is on her way to buy a copy of Keble's *Christian Year,* as a birthday present for the youngest sister, we learn the worst. She

goes into the refreshment bar of Charing Cross Station and has a furtive slug of brandy. You will not be surprised to hear that in volume three poor Virginia goes to a Home for Inebriates.

The three next in line are Gertrude, Martha, and Isabel. They are soon disposed of. Even in the preliminary chapter, when they were aged 14, 12, and 10, they had "no charm but youthfulness." By page 29 Gertrude and Martha are both beyond the troubles of Victorian fiction: "The former of consumption, the other drowned by the over-turning of a pleasure boat." Isabel, the plainest of the lot, does not survive them long (only two pages). She taught in a Board School. "Isabel was soon worked into illness. Brain trouble came on, resulting in melancholia. A charitable institution ultimately received her, and there, at two-and-twenty, the poor hard-featured girl drowned herself in a bath."

The following sentence, I am ashamed to say, moved me to audible mirth. "Their numbers had thus been reduced by half."

I wonder if any really competent novelist ever wrote anything more perversely grotesque than those first thirty pages of *The Odd Women?* It so rouses the wanton nerves of merriment that it almost unfits you to pursue with requisite seriousness the really fine stuff that follows. For there is fine stuff. Monica, the pretty youngest sister, escapes from drudgery in a draper's shop only to marry the hopelessly inappropriate Widdowson, a gloomy and jealous misanthrope old enough to be her father. Monica has been just enough touched by the "emancipation of

women" movement to struggle feebly for her rights to exist as an individual, but is not strong enough to make a go of it. She falls in love with a humorous young wine-merchant, and the episode of her sorry little infatuation is gently managed; yet Gissing tends to be impatient with all women not of intellectual tastes and sometimes seems almost irritated with poor Monica for lending herself to the very coincidences he has contrived for her misery. In the end Monica dies in child-birth; Virginia, as we have said, goes to an Institution; one can suspect that the only reason why even one of the sisters was spared was because someone had to look after the baby—also, ironically, a girl, another Odd Woman for the future.

The real weight and heft of Gissing's novel lies in the love story of Rhoda Nunn and Barfoot. In the character of Rhoda, the young radical so suspicious of men and of marriage, who had within her, unguessed by herself, such rich potential of passionate surrender, Gissing found a theme congenial to his idealism. Rhoda is certainly the finest feminine portrait that I have found in Gissing's gallery; she would rank high in any collection of notable women. Her courage and self-command are set over against the weakling and pitiable lives of the Madden sisters; but her love for the cynic Barfoot is frustrated too. Gissing's irony is at any rate consistent. And, once we can push beyond the deplorably comic effect of his opening passages we begin to perceive his strong pity. Nowadays, when—superficially at least—the footing of woman seems so much more secure, some of the speculations of his emancipated ladies seem truism; but there are those who

are highly praised for courage when they say the same things to-day. With all his distrust of women, his clear eye saw the appalling difficulty of their situation. Rhoda utters a remarkable saying in the course of this story—

> If every novelist could be strangled and thrown into the sea, we should have some chance of reforming women. The girl's nature was corrupted with sentimentality, like that of every woman who is intelligent enough to read what is called the best fiction, but not intelligent enough to understand its vice.

You will suspect, before you finish the three volumes, that Gissing thought highly of Rhoda. He paid her the highest compliment in his repertoire—

> She had not a beautiful face; yet even at the first meeting it did not repel him. Studying her features he saw how fine was their expression . . . the prominent forehead, with its little unevennesses that meant brains.

The phrase is equally true of Gissing's novels. They are full of unevennesses, but there are always brains. His passion for human happiness and decency was so strong that by some queer inward twist it drove him to bedevil his characters for the sake of his high-minded theories. By an equally queer twist in at least one of his readers, that habit of his makes him the ideal novelist for moments of depression.

LETTERS FROM A FORTRESS

A FORTRESS, I suppose, is exactly the opposite of a jail. A jail, theoretically, is a place any one can get into but no one gets out of. A fortress is a stronghold you can leave when you choose, but no one can enter without your permission. People break out of jail, but break into fortresses.

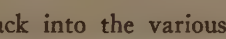
It is well to have some kind of fortress, however impalpable, if you want to talk about things that seem important.

Some time ago I read that a number of Christians in Brooklyn had offered objections to a proposal to erect a statue of Buddha in Prospect Park. Which set me wondering how Buddhists may feel about the little images of their prophet which I frequently see in drugstores. They are used as an advertising symbol for a large firm of importers, they stand on soda fountains or cigarette counters smouldering a small fume of disagreeably sweet incense, they bear in large letters the name of the company that distributes them. I am very ignorant in such matters, but Buddhism has always interested me as a logical and beautiful system of belief, and I presume that such images are regarded as rather sacred by its devotees.

Is it not a little painful to them to see their emblem of divinity used as an advertising device? What would our Brooklyn Christians remark if they found, in shops in the Orient, a crucifix used as a rack for the display of cigarettes or sweetmeats?

I know a man who wants to own an island. Sometimes, when we lunch together, he blurts out rather incoherently some of his notions about it; he even dreams of an archipelago, a cluster of islets to be settled by a few congenial families, one islander to be a doctor; and I can see the vision clearly, with our topsail schooner anchored in a handy cove.

Then, falling back into the various timidities of my kind, I say to myself in the subway, Aren't we all islands already?

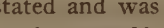


It is a familiar theory in the world of books that a publisher should issue a few little volumes of good verse now and then, even expecting to lose money on them, because it is healthy for the tone of his business, because it wins him the gratitude of authors and often leads to more profitable dealings.

And in the same way, I say to myself, a man of imagination must entertain in his skull many random ideas and wild notions that probably cannot be transacted; dreams

that are violent and strange and not for wide circulation; all these are essential for the medicine of his mind.

And still letters come, sometimes of distress and reproach, and many very friendly and charming that happily reward the heart, saying "What do you mean?" This appears to me an oddity. I cannot quite grasp the notion of writing to an author to ask him what he "meant" by his book or any special passage thereof. It would appear to me that an author, having certainly considered his work more carefully than anyone else, might be supposed to have set down in it as much of his intentions as he intended to be stated and was averse from further argument. Moreover, for myself I should take with great caution any author's explanation of his design, for it might be quite different from what I had decided the thing meant to me; which is the only meaning I need.



Is has struck me as interesting that in casual conversations lately I have noticed the name of Fielding coming up surprisingly often. Perhaps this is due to the instinct of the reading public; a kind of subtle realization that a modern Fielding is one of the things we greatly need. We need someone to play Fielding to the innumer-

able inversions of Richardson that are current. And that book, when it comes, will be written in its own mode, of course, but comparable to the manly simplicity of *Tom Jones* where every gaiety and subtlety of observation is carried on a strong pour of narrative; where the reader, unmercifully chaffed, imagines the ironic fun directed at everyone but himself and so has ease to perceive the great heart behind. Such work will come; it will come because it must, because a million readers hanker for it without knowing what they need. It will be written as plainly as if it were a translation from some other tongue; none of its merits will be dependent on mere verbal skill or prettyness. It will come when there is a writer who can see the egregious humours of our American life not angrily, nor brutally, nor sentimentally, nor as a stunt or skit; a writer who, as Fielding once said, is "admitted behind the scenes of this great theatre of Nature." And no other author, he added, ought to write anything besides dictionaries and spelling-books.

The trend toward that desirable coming is visible, I think, in the revival of interest in picaresque fiction. One publisher has announced a whole library of reprints of classic rogueries. It is my misfortune, I suppose, that I have so often found the classics in that sort rather dull. Even in Rabelais, if I must confess it, it is painful to wade through so much merciless foulness to come upon the lovely little interlude of the Abbey of Theleme. How dif-

ferent our Fielding; *Tom Jones,* a book so clean that the young should never read it.

A young publisher was regretting that there are no authors nowadays who venture to play with their readers as, for instance, Meredith in the idyllic love-scene in *Feverel,* where the penny-whistle provides a mock-Theocritus *motif.* And he went on to say, or was about to when interrupted, that romantic love is rather harshly and grimily handled in current fiction.

This may or may not be so; but thinking about it I was reminded of a chat I had with a bookseller some months ago. He is something of a connoisseur of trees, and was distressed because some pines in his garden were —as he put it—pining away. Some mysterious pox afflicted them, and he called in a forester to consult. The latter told him that the evil was due to his having currant bushes in his garden. (I hope I have this right: I tell it as I remember it.) Apparently the proximity of currants induces some debility in pine trees, and they wither and die.

Perhaps, it occurred to me, a similar botany takes place in literature. Most publishers' gardens have plenty of currant bushes nowadays; by which I mean a low scrubby or bushy sort of novel with thorny and acid properties; excellent for many nourishing and refreshing flavours, but not timber for sea-going purposes. The charm of a pine tree is quite other; chiefly in its height and symmetry, its evergreen durability, and the pleasant mournfulness

of the wind in its fronds. Perhaps, the conifer novel is, for the moment, poxed by some emanation from the currants at its feet.

Or perhaps the analogy is nonsense.

Dr. Canby is quoted as having said, in a lecture, that male characters in fiction nowadays are less lifelike than the female. Certainly at present the female of the novel is more deadly than the male; but I don't quite understand Dr. Canby's saying (as quoted in the press) that "to get real men in books one must go back to Dickens." How about May Sinclair?

But if Dr. Canby is right—and it would be quite like him to be right—perhaps it is because at the moment women are more interesting than men. They are passing through a thrilling phase; the authors of the To-day and To-morrow Series and the Ellis Island authorities are kept busy trying to catch up with them. Between the masculine extremes of the two Ellises—Island and Havelock—there are many tinctures of doctrine; but take her by and large, woman is showing more fermentation. She has more to conceal than man, and, in the present fashion, less desire to conceal it. One who is in the attic of a burning building does not hide the fact that the house is on fire. Women, even more than men, live in the attic of a burning building. It is probably more expensive, psychologically, to be a woman than to be a man. The cost of doing business, psychic business, is greater, because

women have more biological overhead to carry. They operate, perhaps, under a heavier handicap of self-consciousness. Man's complaint, since Eden, has always been that woman is hard to live with; but surely this is fair; she finds her own self hard to live with; harder, I guess, than we do. All this, and the fact that she is beautiful, amusing, and desperately eager to think, is why the novelist finds her stimulating. The old saying about the woman who is "a traitor to her sex" has a valuable suggestion. You never heard of a man who was called a traitor to his sex. In other words, women were supposed to be guarding some appalling secret of campaign. And now, if the secret isn't in circulation, it's not because they haven't been shouting it at us.

Perhaps one fundamental basis of much fiction is suggested by an advertisement I sometimes see. It says that you can buy a female canary for $2.00, but a male costs $4.49. It is the novelist's business to find out why that is so; and especially the female novelist's business to find out whether it will always be so. And most of all it is all novelists' business to practise, now and then, what happened to Montaigne's magpie—"a deep study and dumpish retracting into herself." For it is there, if you retract far enough, that you'll find almost everyone else—men and women both.

Another—and perhaps equally irrelevant—parable occurs to me. I am not a radio devotee, but I gather that there are certain parts of the world, certain seasons of

the year, and certain times of the day, when the ether is specially full of Static; and that when that is so it is peculiarly difficult to get clear tone.

Exactly the same problem appears in literature. In the past few years, the literary ether has been jammed with a very curious and lively kind of Static, which has enormous possibilities for great expression when the proper adjustments can be made. But it also results in this, that if the installation—viz. the imagination of the writer—has not been justly tuned in to the exact undulation, the recital consists mostly of screams, howls, and yelps. As is most profitable in parables, the reader must apply instances and draw conclusions to suit his own taste.

Some of the literary experiments of our time have been tremendously thrilling, others have been tiresome and vain. I like to regard them as *hors d'œuvres,* antipastic appetizers for some possible magnificent feasting that caterers of the next decade may spread. Perhaps the great pieces of resistance, when they come, will not be so very different from what we have been nourished by in the past. But in any event it is well to enjoy *hors d'œuvres* for what they are, nor sate the appetite with them merely because the waiter is tardy. Nor is it fair to complain if they sometimes have a fishy flavour; for *hors d'œuvres* consist largely of small chippings of pungent fish.

It was in a bookshop in the Grand Central Station, and we were speaking of the pleasure of discovering for

oneself the things that the Properly Instructed had known since Kingdom Gone. And then the young woman bookseller (how untruly is it said that Young Women in Bookshops don't know that any books were written before *Peter Whiffle*) said, "I'm discovering Chaucer."

I was so surprised and pleased that I felt it almost impossible to continue the talk; we passed on casually to other topics. But it improves me to remember now and then that hidden in the great world are occasional zealots who have learned, or will, about Chaucer. Our blessed Chaucer, teller of so many tales "thrifty for the nones" (viz. profitable for the occasion) and who would not—greatest of all literary mottoes—"falsen his mateere," falsify his matter. Through all his work, strong as Latakia and sweet as Perique, there rises the effusion of his rich bodily person: his gay tenderness, jolly vulgarity, bursting humour, agonizing pangs of self-reproach; and his masterful brevity when speed is necessary. I thought of *Troilus and Criseyde,* which wise men have called the first and certainly one of the greatest of modern novels. Every now and then—perhaps three times a year—I think of Chaucer's description of the dawn in *Troilus,* where he indulges in his favourite trick of a little chaff in the very act of describing beauty that he loves—

> On hevenë yit the sterrës were y-sene,
> Although ful pale y-woxen was the mone
> And whiten gan the orisontë shene
> Al estward, *as it wont is for to done,*
> And Phebus with his rosy cartë sone
> Gan after that to dresse him up to fare. . . .

The "as it wont is for to done" is Chaucer's little stunt to keep his audience in good humour; I can hear them stirring and smiling gently round the great hearth. There are other times where the immediate audience is forgotten; where (as in every great achievement) the cry is direct to those of his own blood, his fellow-artists of all lands and futures, those who alone will rightly comprehend:—

> Go, litel book! Go, litel myn tragédie!
> Ther God thy maker yit, ere that he dye,
> So sendë might to make in some comédie!

Which is the heart's cry of everyone who has ever tried to deal faithfully with tragic matter.

It is one of the queerest ironies that Chaucer, who gives so indescribable a fullness of mortal cheer to the mature mind, is by most of us tackled only in our teens and then shelved forever. Once you get the hang of his spelling (which after all is not much worse than Ring Lardner's; and how Ring would enjoy him; I should love to see an essay on Chaucer by Mr. Lardner) there is little difficulty. He has been a whole South Pacific for the philologists; shiploads of literary biologists have gone forth to dredge in his deeps and come back happy with phosphorweeds and unknown polyps. But now and then some lucky amateur—for instance Aldous Huxley or Llewelyn Powys—goes surf-bathing in Chaucer and runs shouting to us along the sand—shouting the old good news of his incomparable ozone.

I wonder what he would have thought of the Grand

Central Station, where more pilgrims than Canterbury ever dreamed go pattering by, shriving or unshriven. He would have been quite calm, humorous, and unstaggered. He was himself a kind of Grand Central Terminal of English literature—the terminus at the other end. But if he could have imagined the girl in the station who said "I'm discovering Chaucer," how it would have tickled him.

I find in the mail three of the prettiest possible examples of the artist's consoling habit of considering life's doings from the standpoint of his chosen *métier*. The first is from an author who is also an expert on fine typography:

Two stories I want awfully to get at are these: one a hard, cruel theme of frustration (set perhaps in Linotype Bodoni) and the other a light and fanciful and beautiful thing (set, maybe, in French Cochin).

The second is in a charming letter from a dentist; extracted, shall we say, from a dentist's technical description of some very dainty work he has been doing upon a fair patient. It seems to me a perfect little essay on the Artist's Conscience:

I have been able to avoid the appearance of large masses of gold in the occlusive surfaces and other tooth walls exposed to view. By these means I have made strenuous efforts to conserve æsthetic values which I feel to be of great importance especially in the mouth of a woman. The work

has not been done merely on so many teeth as individuals but I have been at pains throughout to produce a real restorative operation, coördinating tooth with fellow-tooth and with antagonist, to the end that the mechanical values and functions of the denture might be conserved. To do less is to fall short of one's obligations and privileges.

And the third comes from the studio of a painter in Greenwich Village:

For a while I was in a hellish state: the feeling that I was past forty and no longer really young, though of course we always think of ourselves as still merely kids. I was in hell's own misery of restlessness, indolence, self-scrutiny and postponement. I was *in vacuo*. Every day that went by was far too oddly complicated, grotesque, and vivid to attempt any transfer of it onto paper or canvas. Then somehow I have realized lately that I am really only just beginning to live and that all the most beautiful possibilities are ahead, not behind. I've learned, still only a pitiably clumsy little bit, but still a little, to read something of the inner character of other human beings—all bedevilled like myself by the pressing fancy of some loveliness, some consummation of the heart. At 1.30 this morning as I lay awake wondering whether to go on trying to think, or whether to get up and try some anæsthetic, a sudden brightness beaned me. The moon, across those billion leagues of crystal sky, had hunted me out on my very pillow. It never happened before. By some accident of cosmic timing and window arrangement there was a moment, before she slid behind a big apartment house, where she laid her magic right on my face as I lay there solitary in the studio. Did it calm me? Not a damn bit, but it made me think of you and your moonlight chapter. So I thought about you a little, finding you less troubling to think about than some other

matters. Then the moon of course brought me back to Endymion and the Keats illustrations I've been doing—and what are you to do if you begin thinking about Keats at that time of night? I'll tell you what I did, absurd as it was, I lit some candles and arranged a light and took a pencil and a sheet of board and sat down in front of the mirror and spent an absorbed happy hour drawing a portrait of myself. I called it *Portrait of a Damned Fool Who Couldn't Sleep.* Drawing faces of course is the only thing that makes life sensible. What else is so exciting and impossible? What is finer discipline than that madly tender and rigorous attempt to catch the finer shadows of anxiety and "obstinate misgiving" that are in faces—and their immortal laughter?

The huge paradox of Kipling is never more apparent than when you read the reviews of a new book of his. This extraordinary writer, whom we are accustomed to see billed as speaking to the world's hugest fiction audience, is really the subtlest of highbrows. His finest things would bore the slackwit reader just as Shakespeare does. He would have been the greatest professor of English Literature that our tongue has ever known, because he has the violent and tragic sense of literature as the very perspiration of the brow of life. He writes a story ostensibly about big howitzers, and it is really a lover's tribute to Jane Austen. He writes a story apparently about wireless, and it means nothing save to a student of Keats. In *Debits and Credits* the two Stalkies and the Jane Austen story coruscate with literary allusion and esoteric jape. "The Propagation of Knowledge" might have been

written specially to wring the withers of the Modern Language Association. His fragment on "How Shakespeare Came To Write the 'Tempest.'" written in 1898 as a letter to the London *Spectator,* like all his marvellous side-glances into Elizabethan doings (have a look at his old poem "The Craftsman") shows his understanding of how and where poetry is born. Only learned students, packed with curious and private lore, could properly trace the wild chameleon variation of his mind. How with a hundred tints and shadings he has been able to take at will the colour of any man from Horace to Mulvaney—and yet, in the core of the crystal, we see ever the identity of the egregious Beetle. When was there a more vast, wanton, irrepressible, furious, grotesque, and impossible fecundity? It is a silly thing to say—yet how much of literature consists in saying the silliest things possible—there is perhaps more of the specific and technical Shakespeare-gift in our well-loved Beetle than in any other man these times have seen. At his worst, God knows, he is as bad as Shakespeare ever was. At his best, he has looked upon pure flame. Those who know the colour of naked fire will recognize it when they see

> Rubies of every heat, wherethrough we scan
> The fiercer and more fiery heart of man.

James Bone, the London editor of the Manchester *Guardian,* had only been in this country (his first visit)

a few hours when there was delivered to his hotel a letter that seems worth recording as a document. It went thus:—

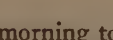
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS
(Colored)

Rev. Hannibal S. Jackson, A.B., A.M., Ph.D., LL.D., D.D.,
Chancellor and Financial Secretary

Dear Sir:—Although the Institute primarily is one of Service to the purity of home literature and art, it also, by resolution of the Senate, stands to further and uphold the American Standard. In line with this Service, you, as a guest in the United States, have responsibilities as to the American Standard, which is no evolution, no drinking, law enforcement and democracy. Under separate cover our Service includes sending you a copy of the American Constitution to obey, which is being sent you to obey. Respectfully yours,

Hannibal S. Jackson.

The Lord loves a happy man; and it gives me pleasure to think how tenderly the President of the Immortals must smile upon the Reverend Hannibal as he sits down to sign and send off a batch of these letters.

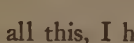


I have an impulse this morning to write about miracles, but first I suppose I ought to give you an idea of the kind of thing I call miracles.

Well, I was going down Fulton Street, past St. Paul's churchyard—and past that great pillared hallway of the New York Telephone Company which I have always told

you was a holy place—and I heard a loud honking. A cop on a motor bike came buzzing along, extending a peremptory hand to avert the crossway traffic. He was followed by some huge busses filled with a throng of unquestionably cheerful people. They all wore badges and the bus was draped with a big streamer largely lettered WELCOME HOME CARL LAEMMLE. I thought it was certainly a good idea to welcome Mr. Laemmle home: it's a good idea, always, to welcome anyone home: I hope it will happen to us all. I waved my hat and felt perhaps a trifle ashamed of not having known that Mr. Laemmle was away.

All right, no miracle in all this, I hear you grumbling. Then, meditating, it suddenly struck me what Mr. Laemmle's name would be if he anglicized it. It would be Charles Lamb, and I tried to imagine a similar procession in honour of Elia. That *would* be a miracle.



I'm afraid that by miracles I really mean the things that stick in one's mind. Louise's tear-stained face the other day, for instance. (Louise is almost eight.) I got home after dark, a clear chilly evening, and in the light of Dean Swift's lamps there was Louise—still outdoors, unusually late for her, hugging a little mustard-coloured dog, a stranger. I knew at once, by the fact that Donny, the sheepdog, was making no protest, that it must be a lady quadruped. No one knew where she came from, but she and Louise fell into one another's embraces. They

fitted perfectly. It would have been worth while (I now realized) just for the sake of seeing a human face transfigured with joy (not too common a sight) to tell Louise she could take the beast to bed with her. Unlike the generous Shakespeare I admit impediments. It would have been an error, but a godlike one. The dog stayed overnight: rathe and bright the next morning she and Louise frolicked their allegiance. For the nonce Louise's saffron-coloured cat, patient victim of her violent embraces, abode unbruised. Perhaps for the first time she had found an animal whose appetite for hugging and being hugged was equal to her own. It was glorious.

Then came time for school. When Louise came home at lunch time, the dog—in the habit of wandering dogs—had vanished. It had gone home, I suppose. But Louise had a bad hour, as bad as Ortheris and Garm I dare say. It was, I think, her first inkling of the love that passes understanding. How quickly it vanished. So can I forget that tear-stained face?

Still not much of a miracle, I suppose. But what is a miracle and what isn't? One day we were driving home from Lake Ronkonkoma, along the Motor Parkway (a whole ribbon of magic that runs for forty miles into Long Island). There was a storm coming and all the cars were in a hurry. There under big trees stood a lonely figure: a girl in plain gingham dress holding out bundles of flowers toward the flying traffic. She was that rarest of sights

nowadays—in our particular landscape, anyhow—a country girl who looked like a country girl. On her face a most curious charm of tenderness, entreaty, and despair. Like everyone else we spun by without stopping—hardly saw her until it was too late to halt. Why should that little glimpse, seen weeks ago for the split of a second, still linger in my mind? Perhaps she was Ophelia.

What is a miracle, then? The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson are a miracle; the patter of acorns on the roof, coming in sudden volleys and scatters all a windy night, is a miracle. I know a wise and great-minded employer who has rarely been observed to give definite orders to his staff. He suggests, makes hints, cunningly implies what he would like to have done; hardly ever puts it in the form of express command. God, whatever you mean by the term, is like that. He gives hints. You get, now and then, a fairly straight intimation of what the universe wants you to do. And when we get any such clear, secret doctrine, we call it a miracle. Do you remember the very humorous passage in the opening pages of the *Phaedrus,* where Phaedrus has, concealed under his cloak, the oration he intends to read to Socrates, but defers bringing it out until Socrates suspects the trick and insists? It is equally true that though God has His manuscript concealed under His cloak He is eager to read it to us if we give Him a chance.

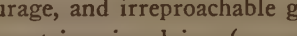
Because it is beautiful or surprising does not make an incident a miracle. It must be congruent in some significant way to the necessity of the moment: it must rhyme with the strangeness that is already there. There are all sorts

of miracles. A whale is a miracle, so is the Eve of Saint Agnes. But canny people don't talk lightly about such delicate matters—whales for instance. Talking about these things is as dainty work as sailing a catboat. You've got to have the breeze on the starboard hand when you hoist your canvas, or you'll have your peak halliards twisted with your topping lift.

Well, I said, he's a perfectly charming fellow; a man of taste and breeding and comely fortune; a man of admirable courage, and irreproachable good sense; a man whom one cannot imagine doing (or even perhaps thinking) anything vulgar or brutal. Yes, I continued, certainly the kind of man I admire, and how I envy his high-minded and honourable serenity. . . .

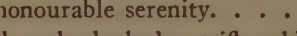
I noticed that she looked a trifle odd.

I haven't the least desire to meet him, she said.



Every time I go up the cellar stair I admire the two hydrangea tubs. Dusty, unwatered, shoved away for months in a dim chilly twilight, even so they have felt the spring and put out their glossy green leaves.

And shall I, I say to myself with a certain shame, be less germinal than a mere hydrangea?



Travelling in the train from Glasgow to Greenock to board the *Transylvania,* I was too busy watching the

scenery to read my morning paper. But I saved it, the Glasgow *Herald* of October 10, 1925, and the other day I dug it out and read it. On the front page there was an advertisement which stated simply:

MR. WARMBATH WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE
AT THE STATION HOTEL, AYR,
OCTOBER 13TH.

I have wondered a great deal about Mr. Warmbath. I wondered whether he could be a bathtub salesman from Barrhead, not far from Ayr, where so much ship plumbing seems to be made. *Shanks and Co., Barrhead*—isn't that the name you always find written in the tub when you take a bath at sea?

Nosing round a bookshop I was pleased to come upon a dusty copy of Mrs. Gatty's *Parables from Nature,* which has been reprinted in the Everyman Series. I wonder if anyone else hereabouts was brought up on Mrs. Gatty, as I was? She was a mighty good fabulist; the moral was always sledged in with very definite blows; but she understood very well the kind of tale that children enjoy. I can hardly reread her little story "On Purring When You're Pleased" without a secret internal pang for the long deceased kittens I loved in my youth. There was a black one called *Bagheera;* he was killed by dogs

soon after the war with Spain. His fate was more important to me than the Battle of Santiago.

It is a mistake, if you have any thinking on hand, to let a dog out into a moonlight night. For a while he'll lie peaceful enough, with his paws drooped over the top step of the porch. But there are stirrings and whispers in the woods of equinox, and sooner or later he'll find something to protest about. Then, being what he is, he disregards whistle and threat; for an hour he rages, near and far, through the milky pallor.

Let a dog out in a moonlight night, he'll find something to bark at. He's just like a poet.

A letter from a young novelist touches charmingly on the same theme. He writes:

Last year I settled up in Sharon, Connecticut, which is not so far from Cornwall, in a large house with remarkable acoustic properties. Not merely can the proverbial pin, which has dropped so many millions of times in so many places to the generation of such repercussions of sound be heard in that house from attic to basement, but it could be heard, if it didn't drop at all but lay merely quiet dozing on its side. When down in the coal bin, I could hear mice in the attic at their little games of tag, or fleas scratching their ears with their left hind legs. In such a place for a year I tried to write fiction, being aware at every moment of the day of the perambulations, the very breathings, of a wife, who is unquestionably the best wife in the world, but is

still a wife; of a baby which is unquestionably the best baby in the world, but is still a baby; and of a dog which is unquestionably the best dog in the world, but is still a wire-haired mutt with an inclination to yap.

About two months ago I had settled down at 10 o'clock one night to write a story. My family was all abed, I thought, when my wife came into my study and asked me if she could read me something. I resigned myself patiently and she sat down and read to me, punctuating her reading with gales of laughter, that particular portion of "Thunder on the Left" which describes the difficulty of writing in the country. "How hard to concentrate when there is nothing to concentrate from." I gave up my story in despair and took the next train to the city and back to this publishing world which I love.

One morning driving over to Manhasset I saw Donny, the sheepdog (it suddenly occurs to me that perhaps the explanation of his barksome humour is that he is a sheep-dog who has never seen a sheep; undoubtedly there is that great secret vacancy in his life which he attempts to assuage by midnight outcry) a long way from home. He was investigating merrily in some roadside brush, his plumy tail curled high, his dark eyes resolute with excitement. He did not recognize the car as I shot by, had no notion that I saw him; and catching him there unawares gave me a queer godlike feeling. I wondered whether, if I had stopped and howdied, he would have been just a little embarrassed to be found far from his proper range? Speaking godlike, I am glad to believe

that he wouldn't. He'd have greeted me with his gentlemanly gaiety, and been not at all ashamed.

I believe there's a lesson here for all sorts of gods.

Literature nowadays is constructed on a formula precisely like the old-fashioned corn cure, which was made of a mixture of alcohol (13 per cent.) and cannabis (41 grs. per fl. oz.). Cannabis is a moraceous herb of the hemp family, very powerful for eating away callouses. The mixture is a clear, highly volatile syrup with a strong sweetish, aphrodisiac perfume. (Keep phial tightly corked when not in use.) The same is true of contemporary fiction. It is effective, if properly applied to indurations and callosities of the spirit caused by the tightness and friction of modern life. After application, soak the mind in very hot water, and then out comes the callous. It seems to me strange that literary critics are so much more ignorant of life than the average country druggist.

OLD GLASS

"Now here's a beautiful piece," said the little antiquary. "See that colour; a real bit of old glass." He handed me a knobby fruit-dish of blue lattice-work. I praised its colour and gave it back to him; it seemed to me crude and common, exactly like the cheap glassware on the

shelves of a country store where I once worked as a boy. It may have been very old and very beautiful; but who can tell?

THE AGNOSTIC

"THERE are no fairies in New York," she said; "New York is too articulate; to be mute is the essence of fairyishness."

Soft southwestern gold floated through the windows of the roof-garden; light curtains tangled in the breeze, splinters of ice rang in the tall tea-glasses. Behind her, far down town, I could see the blue pagoda of the Woolworth Building.

FRAGMENT IN SABLE

"SHE is very handsome in black; it would not be safe to marry a woman who looks so well in mourning. In fact, it hasn't been."

"Every woman looks well in black, every woman is a potentially beautiful widow."

"That is why the institution of marriage will never be abandoned."

SOLSTICE

THE wide lawns are brilliant in the glow of June; pure tranquil fragrant air moves steady and sweet under the old trees. There, where life has been lived long and mannerly, in decent secrecies, still some strangeness lurks. In the library, where green fringe of ivy frames the tall open windows, the moist coolness of a sprinkled garden

drifts between the pages of those living dead men, poets. But under the beech boles, outbooks, there is warm coppered shining; such tawny light as gilds the gipsy's knees. Pagan tides of summer, parting round that dyke of brave books, eddy and deepen in hollows on the grass. Not far away, over the old Conestoga Road (have poets ever hearkened those syllables? Came, balladist: a measure for you; *I spent my boyhood walking on the Conestoga Road*) a lettered streamer stretches from side to side. CARNIVAL, it says; but the breeze has folded it on itself so that the IV is concealed.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT

NIGHT after night in the silent country: clear stars speckled over the heavy air, the tick of acorns dropping, the maddening attentions of an immigrant buzz-fly hallucinated by the lamp. In the woods now and then a slicing shaft of brightness, some wandering car crumbling over those stony lanes; seeking seclusion, of which there is plenty. There are light footsteps that run mysteriously past; a far halloo of song where an Italian picnic goes trucking down the Mineola road.

Are there nymphs, elves, young kids of Pan in those thickets? There are copses and no cops, said an irreverent student of midsummer nights. Donny, the sheepdog, hears something that disturbs him. Off he goes; trailing outcry as a rocket trails light; long and long I hear him yelling and viewing with alarm; until others too take up the anger and echo it across half a township. Rage unsettles

me; such rage as an anthropomorphic God might feel to see bumpkin spellbinders palavering the mystery of His world.

Donny comes back, breathing hard and muttering to himself; so comic in sincerity that who could get out the strap for a thrashing? And once more I put away the blank paper, and wonder how to set down even one word; one little word to break the dull spell of inaction; one word bold enough to break through into stifled fables in my heart.

"When I'm fond of a woman," he said, "I never can resist the temptation of telling her how beautiful she is."

(This man is doomed, I thought to myself; or else he has had singular good fortunes.)

"But surely," I said, "it can't always be untrue?"

"Toi, poisson lamentable!" he cried fiercely, mocking my simplicity. "If you tell them they're beautiful, by gemini they become so."

He insisted there was a whole rationale of æsthetic in this doctrine, and hankered to expound; but I left him and proceeded to lunch. My Plimsoll mark is painted rather low; one aphorism a day is capacity.

"Have you read *Chekhov's Notebook?*"

"Rather! I think it's better than anything he ever published."

"But isn't everyone's? Haven't we all got in our note-

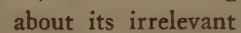
books things too beautiful, too humble, too comically true ever to trust them to print——"

"While we're alive, anyhow, and people can take us seriously."

Keep close to your green earth, she wrote. *There's strength in it.*

As soon as the letter was mailed she was furious. Liar, liar! she said to herself. There *isn't* strength in it, not for me. Nothing but torment. Is there strength in seeing a birch tree grow, a bird tutoring its young, a field of daisies going about its irrelevant business? There isn't strength anywhere except in poor absurd human beings, so comely and so comic. There's more strength in the shape of a hand than in all the cliffs of the Grand Canyon.

Then she went out and worked in the garden. From 4.59 to 5.17 (Eastern Standard Time) she was very happy; but I did not compel her to admit it.



"Here! What have you been having *my* thoughts for?"

"It's my business to have everybody's thoughts."

FOREIGNERS

WHEN a ship comes in from sea, and lies in a foreign harbour with a tender or pilot-boat under her side, the passenger leans over the rail listening with keen attention to those anonymous voices. It is as near as he ever comes to the comprehending detachment of a ghost or a god that walks secretly among men. The strange stillness of the vessel, after days of tremble and swing, is uncanny; and also it is dark, so all you know of this outland port is the eloquent sparkle of lighthouses and the distant brightness of a town. Even there, though it is "abroad," supper is on the table, children are going to bed, and the universal human law is in operation, viz. that people prefer to be amused. When the *Caronia* was at Plymouth one September evening I harkened sharply for the first English voice from the tender *Sir Richard Grenville*. The travelling ear, exempt for a few weeks from all familiar hubbubs, takes with thrilling significance these altruist fragments of sound. Overhearing is so much more enigmatic than hearing. Conrad described at the end of the *Personal Record* the first English words he ever heard in their native use, when he was a boy in a French pilot-boat alongside a British tramp. They were "Look out, there," growled by some seaman in the dark. The first

words I heard at Plymouth were of the same gruff practical sort. "Make that line fast forrard."

I have not forgotten the first French I ever heard on French soil. It was in 1912 when another youngster and I were debarking from a small cargo-steamer at Boulogne: I heard a stevedore cry out "Ce n'est pas la même chose!" There was a queer sing-song cadence in his way of saying it. I can still recognize in my memory his bearded and rather messianic face; he uttered the words, evidently, as a witty retort to something one of his mates had said. To me they were the best of wit, unforgettable, for they brought home to me how many "foreigners" there are in the world.

How long, I've been asking myself, can the resensitized freshness of eye, due to a trip abroad, be made to last? Until it dulls you can look at your own scenes with almost the clear gaze of a benevolent alien. It is sad to think that one should grow so wonted to local humours as not to find amazement in the bursting oddities of his surroundings. On the windows of Lord & Taylor's big store, for instance, I now notice again what I had long ago remarked and then forgotten, a little shield inscribed *Members of the Save New York Committee.* On this I gaze almost with a Frenchman's eye and wonder what it means. In the Hudson Terminal I contemplate a sign over a train-gate. It says:

PHILADELPHIA
COMMERCIAL
WASHINGTON
SO. RY. EXPRESS

and I try to imagine just how that would strike a foreigner. How would the word Commercial bother him? Would he conclude that only business men were allowed on that train? How would he construe the SO. RY.? For it is those little things that perplex or amuse the externe. Englishmen, for instance, find it very comic to see thousands of ochre-coloured vehicles, evidently for hire, carefully inscribed *Yellow Taxi.* The yellowness of the cab is patent, and the Briton regards the statement of it on the car as another evidence of American love of the obvious. Well, I have pondered over this and still see nothing queer about it. But it is valuable to find out just what diverts the stranger. It may well be that the whole of life is a cunningly concealed hocus which vastly amuses the company in Heaven, but whose comic relief we are too immersed in to relish properly.

In the same way, the things you yourself notice when *you* are the foreigner do not seem curious to those who live with them. The sign on the London tube-stations, *Every Hour a Rush Hour,* was so infinitely more like the customary notion of New York that it afflicted me with amazement. But I could find no Londoner who thought it odd. Or if you stand opposite the old stained gateway of St. James's Palace, admiring the wine shops and the tailor's windows (I was wondering if that's where the Prince of Wales buys his ties) two little scarlet sentries suddenly come to life, walk stiffly forward, turn back to back, and begin gravely patrolling. This, to an American eye, is sheer and perfect fairy tale; it is more intimately and charmingly funny than anything in a musi-

cal comedy because it is real; it is far too delightful for laughter. But on St. James's Street everyone takes it for granted.

The mind comes back from travelling with a certain number of half-apprehended kinks—rather like burrs in the fell of a long-haired dog who has been skirmishing in autumn woods. These little knots are equally hard to disengage. What I am getting at is that "foreigners"—any foreigners—are really gods; or fairies, if you prefer the term—because, as regards most of what they see they are benignly disinterested; they estimate it on a scale of reference which is unknown to us. Like gods and fairies, also, foreigners are discredited: I mean that the average stay-at-home literally doesn't believe in them; doesn't admit they exist. I heard Harry Franck, the well-known wanderer, say that in many Chinese villages the inhabitants really have no conception of "foreigners" at all; if anyone arrives in strange garb they merely conclude that he is from some distant part of China. And the idea I clumsily approach is that the things that foreigners notice, and are amused by, are always the inessential things. For the things that no one, anywhere, finds queer or writes home about, are the universal urgent matters. Every land, every age, every sect, has always had some precious legend of some greatest of all Foreigners who came to this life from an incomprehensible one; who mingled awhile with the natives, was disillusioned by their villainies, and either fled or was massacred. This was because he insisted too heartily on noticing the things that seemed, to his inscrutable scale of reckoning, queer.

Foreigners

The oddest things of all, of course, are the things you find abroad that are exactly the same as at home. What a sense of outrage to find, in London tea-shops, the familiar blazon

SODA FOUNTAIN—LUCHEONETTE

In the advertising columns of a London weekly I observed the following:—

Male of 30, bigoted non-dancer, morbid, loose-thinking, sentimental and boring, interests humanity, Irish Poetry, and God (any variety), seeks someone with whom to exchange cynicisms and gaspers in streets and cinemas and over his gas-fire. Redness (hair or politics) an attraction.—Box 129, NEW STATESMAN, 10 Great Queen Street, Kingsway, London, W.C. 2.

In one of Mr. C. E. Montague's fine short stories (in the far-too-little discovered volume *Fiery Particles)* there is an Irishman who asserts that he was "born below par to the extent of two whiskeys." He requires two whiskeys, no more no less, for his mind to rise to its natural stature. Similarly we are most of us two tots of observation below par. We are not foreigners enough in our own surroundings. We are like those deplorable Americans in Paris who spend the great part of their time flitting back to the Express Company's office where there is a shoe-shining coon who makes them feel *chez soi;* a coon who can tell them about "Helen and Warren" or Red Grange's last touchdown. So we forget to be aliens while we have the priceless chance; and forget that the fiery particle is forever a foreigner in this restless planet.

Whether it has any home anywhere is another question—in fact *the* other question; the only other question there is.

I forget Bacon's exact phrase; it was something like this: there is no eminent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. Which is evidently a concise statement of the thought I am fumbling with, that those write best who write of life as foreigners. A man may have this uncanny gift and yet have no narrative art. He may not be as easy to read as our adorable old Conan Doyle, for example, who must never be forgotten as a king among story tellers. Who has begun a tale more delightfully than the opening of almost any Sherlock Holmes episode taken at random? For instance "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet"—

"Holmes," said I, as I stood one morning in our bow-window looking down the street, "here is a madman coming along. It seems rather sad that his relatives should allow him to come out alone."

Can that be surpassed for embarking the reader's attention?

I don't quite see what all this is tending toward. My own conclusion is that going away for a little while is specially valuable because it teaches one to appreciate the quick unspoiled wits of one's own children, the most engaging of all Foreigners. I wish I were as prompt a composer as the Urchin, who writes a play in an hour after lunch. He has a genius for titles, too. I asked him what his new play was called (he is nearly nine, I should explain) and he showed me the manuscript. It is called "The Girl Who Stayed Up."

BRIEFCASE

I. THE PEAK OF TENERIFFE

THE trees on the south side of the street hid her from me as I came down the hill; but I did not cross over, not wishing to see her prematurely. I had a feeling that she would be something rather special, and I wanted to honour her in my own way. A delightful lady remarked to Henry Thoreau, apologizing for not having answered his letters, "I didn't suppose you'd even care to tip your hat to me any more." "Madam," he replied, "I never tip my hat while crossing a stream." He was right. The perfect obeisance must be made at the perfect moment.

Here I pause, and walk uneasily about the room. A letter from a librarian reproaches me for writing about trifles. How do I know exactly what is a trifle and what isn't? There are queer sudden occasions when things distantly heard of become real, and all that I want to tell you just now is how the peak of Teneriffe rose over the horizon of my mind. I had often read of that blue splinter; who hasn't? But it was on a sunny day on a North River pier that I first got a bearing on it. If that seems too trifling, there is no law compelling you to continue.

She lay at the pier, a little white 500-ton barque, built of wood in an antique fashion; she is fifty years old. The unskilful eye would probably, at first gaze, think her a bit tubby in shape until the lofty rise of her bowsprit had been studied and the clean sweep of her honest old quarters fining under from her stern. Her transom was looped by a thick carved hawser, the ends meeting in a sailorly square-knot over the rudder post, and crowned above by the bright painted shield of the town of Majorca, where she was built. Her catheads, as the mariner who was with me pointed out, were really what the name suggests: the carved face of a cat grinned on each one. A queer big timber straddling the galley—perhaps to keep the flimsy little house from being unshipped by a sea—projected in a painted dragon's head gaping on each side. Aloft, in the narrowing interval of the backstays, small cords were patterned in the shape of five-pointed stars. On the bulwark the posts supporting the side-ladder ended in two bronze hands, bright with many grasps. She even seemed to go back to an age when ships needed not only every staunch contrivance but charms and emblems as well. They needed then those poetries that are only vestigial in modern steamships: the cunning of the cat, the magic of the dragon, to outface the cruel sea. This rugged old vessel was of the Mediterranean and spoke the Latin imagination in every timber. Over her taffrail floated the red and yellow flag of Spain.

It was just in the noontime vacancy of full summer. Below the great reefs of Riverside Drive apartment-

houses she lay there like a vigia, like a mirage, like something out of Coleridge. She lay empty as a drum, waiting for her cargo. Looking down the hatches one could see nothing but her big beams and ribs, and a sprinkle of onions in the tween-deck; waiting their turn, I suppose, in some powerful olio. Under the focsle-head, among the anchor gear, lay Spanish sailors with bearded lips, asleep. On the deckhouse, aft, slept a black cat. The first mate, a young Don so handsome that if I were a moving picture producer I would at once offer him a job, walked briskly up and down talking to the second, a pock-marked veteran with a little blue béret. So she lay, like a drowsy fable from the Spanish Main, when her skipper took us aboard. He had been waiting for us, with the perfect courtesy of his race, at the shore end of the pier.

You enter the cabin through a little lobby where a table is built round the mizzen-mast. A small steep stair, with a picture of the Virgin over the door, takes you down into the panelled cuddy, bright with tapestries. The captain's seat, in the middle of the curved stern-settee, is fitted with two stout arm-pieces; no matter how she rolls the skipper can sit solid. From his stateroom to starboard he can look forward through a porthole and see how his ship is behaving. On the sideboard, instead of the traditional bowl of fruit for harbour-display, a long row of books—including Conrad and Ibáñez. A big cheese on a shelf in one corner, and on the table, the box of cigars that every skipper has to have handy for officials and agents. Through the open skylight came the perpendicu-

lar sun; I could not help imagining how that slice of brilliance must swing to and fro when she is at sea. And, as her skipper speaks excellent English, he and my companion talked of the Canary Islands, where the ship comes from. I listened, as was a landsman's duty; but you know how it was that I saw Teneriffe rising from the sea.

It is difficult—indeed, it is impossible—to convey to you the rich colour of that little panelled cabin in the poop of an old ship. There are times when the problem is not to describe what things look like but what they mean. As we talked with the Captain, who is young and handsome and an artist in temperament (he is writing a book, by the way) it gradually became apparent that this was an occasion which, among gentlemen, could only be honoured in one way. When our host, as was his right, produced his own private bottle of Malaga Dulce —such wine as might have inspired Emerson's noble *Bacchus*—and poured the tumblers, I thought painfully of those who imagine that the fair sacrament of drink exists only in the violent ingurgitation of whiskey. My companion and I rose to our feet, thinking perhaps of Mr. Webster's cartoons of "The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship." I do not know exactly what is the seemly phrase to utter when pledging a gentleman of Spain. I remember, with some embarrassment, that I ejaculated (with the best intentions) "Corpo di Baccho," which is perhaps Italian rather than Spanish. But what was really in my mind, and what I should have toasted, was a blue mountain on the skyline.

II. THE SCUMMER

A MAN I know is a great lover of the wine of Anjou. This is because he has a romantic spirit: he has curly hair, wears very crumply soft collars, and he is about to be married. He is at the time of life when things like the wine of Anjou (which I mention only as a symbol) are very important. In fact for him also it is only a symbol; he admitted to me lately that he has never tasted it. But he has encountered it in literature, and I believe that in his mind it stands for youth, gallantry, sitting up late at night, and the Three Musketeers. To me too the Angevin wine means a great deal. It was wandering in the streets of Cherbourg that I learned about it. There is a little wine-merchant's shop looking out on the market place; there, in the window, I saw a cask and a sign *Vin d'Anjou,* 1 fr. 80 a bottle. Rather cheaper than Coca Cola, I said to myself (the franc being then at about 5 cents). At the hotel they were charging 7 francs for the same thing; but that was because the little man in a green baize apron had to go down to the cellar and bring it up to you; and most of the Americans at that hotel wouldn't have believed it was good wine if they only paid 1 fr. 80 for it. Anyhow, when we moved into our own cottage at Donville I laid in a supply of *Vin d'Anjou,* a very superior grade that cost 2 francs 10 a bottle, and made it my particular beverage all summer. And to me, as to my friend in the soft collar, it gradually became a thing of rich and vaguely romantic meaning;

though I was too ignorant to realize that it was famous in literature.

So when I began wondering what to give this fellow for a wedding present, I naturally thought of the wine of Anjou. That was not obtainable. But it ought to be (I felt) something connected both with liquor and literature. For my friend has been editing an anthology of drinking songs. It is illustrated by an American artist who is just as talented as the late and justly admired Lovat Fraser; this artist has thrown himself into the task with so much gusto that his wife has been quite agitated; she thinks it a rather degrading task. But one warm day lately, still pondering about the anthologist's wedding present, I stopped in at the Court View Hotel in Mineola, L. I. That is a fine old flavorous road-house; it would be too intricate to tell you why it has such agreeable association for me. It has a cool dusky bar with a cheerful big man behind it; and I will remind you that no one is likely to misconduct himself severely in a saloon right opposite the county courthouse. There, having a glass of strictly legal percentage, I saw the perfect wedding present. Not Mr. Ovington himself could have equalled it. The big man behind the bar was wiping the foam from the glasses with a charming little black thing he called a scummer. In all the many times I had seen this done I had never before thought of a scummer as a wedding present. But now it occurred to me what a fine paper-cutter it would make. It was made, I guess, of hard black rubber, and exactly the size and shape of a paper-cutter. And I knew what pleasure it would give my

nubile friend, perhaps even his bride too, to cut the pages of new books with this little utensil that had done honourable service so long in that old Long Island bar-room. It had scummed smoothly across the creaming tops of how many crystal goblets, pushing the suds off onto the perforated brass plate where it seeps gently away. With it would come some association of old and innocent hilarities. For not all of us who are fond of bar-rooms, my Angevin bridegroom is wise enough to know, are mere sots. Think of that great voice *(sotto voce)* the Old Soak.

So I asked my friend the landlord if he'd part with his scummer. And here comes the sorrow: he wouldn't. I offered as high as a quarter for it, but he said it was the last one he has. He used to have any number of scummers, he said; the brewers gave them away complimentary, but they don't do that no more. And when his scummer got mislaid lately he had to use the lid of a cigar-box, which was distasteful to customers. I went as high as fifty cents but he was still obdurate. I left disappointed, but since then I have had an inspiration. I shall buy a nice ivory (or perhaps celluloid) paper-cutter and take it to him, asking him for the old black scummer in exchange. For a man who understands about the wine of Anjou must have the best possible wedding present.

III. THE CAMDEN BRIDGE

When you see the great stride of the Camden Bridge, and look up at it from below, along the Philadelphia docks, you have already crossed it in your mind. That is

the joy of bridges, crossing them before you come to them.

Bridges are well guarded: the Camden crossing has not only its uniformed toll officers, but also some mysterious Supervisor of the Yellows who keeps tab on taxies, to prevent Pennsylvania cabs from poaching on New Jersey; or perhaps vice versa.

Early in its difficult story society learned to guard bridges. All great crossings are watched and tariffed by prudential pontiffs, worldlywise or otherworldlywise. When men cross bridges they breathe a new air, have a sense of translation. Such men are dangerous. The state guards well its bridgeheads; for there are always a frantic few who, after crossing bridges, burn the pontiffs behind them.

In Harleigh Cemetery. When Walt took cover at last he did not rest on the earth, he burrowed into it. There is nothing Quakerish about that grave: it is pagan, palæolithic. The massive cromlech tomb is dug into the hillside; it is piled together of huge unsmoothed granites. He was called a cave man, but he did not become so until he was dead. In an age of decorated urns and weeping marble angels he built this little stronghold in the forgiveness of earth—the earth of whom we ask so many questions; and who troubles us because she tells us so few lies.

Always tribal, he took his clan in with him. The niche you see plainest is, I think, his mother's. His own is almost behind the door. He left the door half open, and so it always stands. He can pass unquestioned out and in. I think he is more often out. So it is not really a tomb but

a cenotaph. Perhaps every grave is. Every grave is an unknown soldier's.

Above that green hillside is some sort of stone-cutting workyard. "Here comes one among the well-beloved stonecutters," as he wrote once with perhaps a touch of that quaint Hicksite humour that it takes us so long to catch the slant of. Slabs of plain stone lie about under the trees. They are waiting for names.

Walt was called a loafer because he liked to watch others work. What they forgot was that his work was the kind that cannot be watched. No one except God ever watched a poet working.

His work has been called a shout, a yawp, an outcry, but inside all the ejaculatings, promulgings, effusings, was a core of quiet. If you cut open any of his greater poems, to study the concentric graining and pattern, you will not only find a delicately wise artist, you will find at the centre a germ of silence.

That he was a great terrene creator, casual, fecund, and sporadic like earth herself, is admitted by most; that he was a precise artist in detail is more often questioned. Yet even his catalogues, much reproached, are often marvels of cinematic portraiture and studio technique. And catalogues (bibliophiles know) may be works of cunning art. His epithets, his flash pictures of trades and persons, are magnesium flares. Magnesium not only produces sudden dazzling lights ("used in signalling," says the dictionary: oh glorious!) but is also "an antacid and cathartic."

"Once I passed through a populous city," he wrote, "im-

printing my brain for future use." There indeed escaped the perfect self-description of the artist.

Sometimes, in moments of anger, disappointment, folly, futility, there seems something a little too easy in that cosmic meliorism of his—"the flag of his disposition, of hopeful green stuff woven." One thinks with a certain sympathy of his brother George who all his life, after puzzling over Walt's verses, kept asking him rather slyly "Walt, what's the game?"

I think of Walt as I mow the lawn. (*Lawn* is too smooth a word.) I observe that the stiff and coarse grass-blade gets cut down, while the soft and supple grass bends over and escapes. This lures me into cheerful analogies. Then I reflect that it's all the same in the end, for the gardener goes back over the ground and gets the soft one with the shears.

When they put up a monument on Roosevelt Field, to mark the spot where Lindbergh took off, I hope they'll inscribe on it that line of Walt's—

Starting from Paumanok I fly like a bird.

IV. THE EXCISE MAN

Emory Holloway's compact little "Popular Authorized Edition" of *Leaves of Grass,* gives us more than 400 pages at the easy price of $1.25. It is admirable—and I think unique among cheap editions—in containing also a well chosen selection of Whitman's prose. It is an edition intended chiefly for younger readers—"immature students whose poverty of experience handi-

caps them in judging sanely," Professor Holloway says in his preface. To that end the poems have been carefully sifted and abridged, the howls restrained by decorum (Walt's phrase). Professor Holloway's omissions seem to me sensible enough. What I question is the judiciousness of always indicating the hiatus (by a line of dots) which is often done in just such a way as to rouse the curiosity of our immature student. I firmly believe that wherever omissions are advisable it is far better simply to go ahead and omit, without anchoring a buoy to mark the foundered passage. That Walt must be edited for the tender reader is a theorem that seems to me beyond dispute. He was like the old-fashioned Buddhist who discards nothing and even preserves the toe-nail parings of a lifetime in a lacquer box so that he may eventually render his corpus complete to its Maker.

That, I suppose, is a problem of editorial policy and may be left *sub judice*. My argument would certainly not be that Professor Holloway has taken out too much, but that here and there he has left in just enough to sharpen the anxious instinct of adolescence. Of course the adult student will insist on his Leaves entire, crying "The Deil run awa' with the excise man."

For his judicious assortment of Walt's prose Professor Holloway deserves nothing but praise. I still cannot convince myself that Democratic Vistas, for instance, is familiar to one per cent of its possible beneficiaries. This gorgeous, magnificent, and sometimes gently ludicrous discussion of the American "literatus," the need of "powerful native philosophs and bards" can afford to be a

trifle absurd at times, as only very great things can. It is nine tenths ethos and one tenth bathos; sometimes one feels that the ideal "Philosoph" whom Walt imagines is less literatus than saleratus. The rich meat of Walt's theme is joyously streaked with occasional gristle and fat. But let not any hilariousness at its naïveté blind you to its enormous power and purport. It is full of "precious minims," that fine phrase of Walt's that always stuck in Thomas Mosher's mind. Not in the most modernist journalism will you find more arrows sharpened and aimed toward the target of To-morrow. It is a queer thing that the most violently contemporary of our literatuses is the one who has been dead these thirty-four years. Take, almost at random, a few scraps from Democratic Vistas—would you not say they came from this month's *American Mercury?*—

The main social, political, spine-character of the States will probably run along the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi rivers. . . .

A nation may hold and circulate rivers and oceans of very readable print, journals, magazines, novels, library-books, "poetry," etc., and yet, all the while, the said nation, strictly speaking, may possess no literature at all. . . .

Do you call those genteel little creatures American poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I think I hear the scornful laugh of the Genius of these States. . . .

To workmen portraying interior or spiritual life, the audiences are limited, and often laggard—but they last forever. . . .

Of what is called the drama in the United States I should say it deserves to be treated with the same gravity and on

a par with the questions of ornamental confectionery at public dinners. . . .

Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling certain popular demands, with plenteous knowledge and verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and its very joy is morbid. . . .

Here, you see, is a rather different voice from the robust auto-intoxicant of the Leaves. The poetry gives us Walt, but the prose gives us Whitman. He felt pretty low in his mind about America when he wrote Democratic Vistas. The Leaves, he remarked once, were not so much a poem as a "radical utterance out of the Emotions and the Physique." But Emotions and Physique had little to do with the Vistas, when he sat down and began gingerly to contemplate the appalling possibilities of conglomerate democracy. He seemed to have a faint hope that great things might be accomplished by the advance of women (which he endlessly prophesied, though insisting more on fecundity than the modern Minerva would relish). "A strong and sweet Female Race, a race of Perfect Mothers," was the burden of his song. It was the lady, however, who had the burden of the child, and would have found Walt distressingly inconsecutive as a family head. He complained that Perfect Mothers had not been represented in fiction, but that was before the days of Gene Stratton-Porter.

I wish cheerfulness wouldn't keep breaking in when one writes about Walt. He said (somewhere in the Vistas, I think) that the Future Literatus must not have any sense of burlesque. Yet nothing would be more humanly

entertaining than a consensus of the various opinions that have been uttered about him from the time of Emerson and Thoreau to the present. Perhaps William Sloane Kennedy has done that in his *The Fight of a Book for the World,* which I haven't seen. Kennedy says in his circular *"Leaves of Grass* has had already a sparkling triumph like that of Uncle Tom's Cabin." Against which I find, in a review in the London *Times Literary Supplement* (Jan. 22, 1925) the astonishing statement "Whitman is little read in America and is totally without influence there." The same journal said (Dec. 11, 1924) "Nothing is more certain than that Whitman believed in personal immortality, the survival of bodily death." I doubt whether this is certain. Almost everything in regard to Whitman criticism is still in a state of healthy flux. Sir Edmund Gosse, who has said (like everyone else) things both wise and preposterous about Walt, is particularly offended by the 1855 Preface, which some of us so greatly admire. "What is prodigious in the poetry becomes mean and bumptious in this dreadful prose." That was in the London *Sunday Times* of June 20, 1926; almost on the same date Stuart Sherman, in the *Herald-Tribune,* was saying of the Preface "a literary document which interests and stirs me more profoundly than any similar prelude to a new age in the annals of literature." Gosse, attributing Walt's ornery taste to the fact that he once worked on the Brooklyn *Eagle,* says "Was all this not responsible for the hideous crudity of phrase which seems to be always lurking to leap out upon Whitman's most ambitious periods?" And at the same moment

St. Loe Strachey was writing to the New York *Times* about "Whitman's power and inspiration in the matter of the great phrase."

The justest and most sympathetic balancing of pros and cons in regard to Walt that I have seen lately is John Bailey's excellently shrewd and perceptive little volume in the revived English Men of Letters series. But none of the newer Whitman criticism need make one forget Bliss Perry's fine study, now twenty years old, with its thrilling conclusion—"No American poet now seems more sure to be read, by the fit persons, after one hundred or five hundred years."

V. THE FOLDER

WHAT actually happens in a writer's mind when he gets through fidgeting and fuming and sits down to tackle the job must always remain a secret between himself and his Demon. The preliminary horrors and shufflings are a valid part of the human comedy. There are innumerable ways of postponing. Some sit on the floor and begin dusting the books on the lower shelves, where they usually find *The Pentecost of Calamity* or *The Cradle of the Deep* and reread it entire. Others get into pyjamas and trim their toe-nails, or lock themselves in an office building with a bottle of Bisquit Dubouché. Homer Croy has remarked that his form of trifling is tinkering with his typewriter. "I have the best-cleaned typewriter in the world," he says, rather ashamed.

One of my own recreations, when I have definitely and finally decided to get on with the MS., have rearranged

all the unanswered letters, found the straightened-out paper-clip I use as a pipe-cleaner, reread all the detective stories, and looked at books by Storer Clouston and Earl Derr Biggers with a sigh, to remind myself that there are still authors who understand the old enchantments—my recreation then is to go ploitering in my Folder of Blurbs. A person in my occupation is the target of daily volleys of circulars, "envelope stuffers," publicity notes and what-not from every publisher and Biblioshark Sodality. I do not destroy these precious unguents, I put them in a large folder and as I say, when I am all ready to work I study them pensively, gradually weeding out those whose significance I seem to have mastered. There is the photograph postal-card, for instance, of a little frame house in Plattsburg, Mo., with a large sign on it: *In this house was born O. O. McINTYRE, February 18, 1884.* There is the circular about a book *(Kabuki)* on the Japanese popular theatre. One paragraph of this evidently struck me, at one time, as being important, for I see this portion has been pencil-marked:—

> One of the most distinguished of the great Japanese actor families is The Danjuro line which gave the stage eight generations of actors to carry on the family tradition of *aragoto,* or grotesque, unreal acting.

I think my idea was that there was a pleasant kernel for a story in the notion of a man whose mind had been trained, through eight generations, to act grotesquely. What would his "normal" behaviour be like? Also a little

meditation on the *onnagata,* in the same circular, saved me, for an hour or so, from doing any real work:—

One important chapter deals with the onnagata, the actors who play women's parts. Ayame, one of the first great onnagata, has left a book of precepts for his successors. He declared that an onnagata should have the heart of a woman, even in the gakuya, or green room. All his actions, on the stage and off, should be feminine.

From this it is a near transition, for the conscientious student of the Folder, to a Borzoi broadside in which also we find philosophy:—

It has long been known that a feminine element is present in all artistic happening, and that it is a necessity to the artist to find this feminine element, whether within or outside himself or both within and without. But *Stephen Hudson* has gone much further in disentangling the problem. He shows first of all that this feminine element necessary to intellectual creation does not demand mere intelligence in a woman. This again was known, and the fact has driven artists to non-intelligent woman which is a great error. *Stephen Hudson* gives here an experimental demonstration of what the type of woman is which is necessary to the artist: not an intellectual proper, not a non-intellectual, but a woman who has an instinct for intellectual creation—a totally different thing from intelligence, or from artistic creative power in a woman.—From *A Note on Stephen Hudson,* by Denis Saurat, Professor at the University of Bordeaux.

There are other odds and ends, all grist for a John Stuart Mill, that find their way into this Folder of

nepenthe. To fill an author with a sense of futility what could be more potent than this, from the New York *Times:*—

HOLLOW LIBRARIES

Long sheets of cardboard printed and coloured to give the appearance of the backs of rows of books may be purchased cheaply for covering the empty shelves of libraries. The backs of standard sets of books of miscellaneous collections may be found in surprising variety. When these are carefully arranged behind the glass doors of bookcases the illusion of well-filled shelves is almost perfect. It is thus possible to furnish, or appear to furnish, empty shelf space at a trifling expense.

Over against which, to restore one's faith that the arts do have their effects, the rambler in the Folder finds, from the New York *Herald Tribune:*—

COMEDY DISLOCATES JAW

Miss Lillian Schaeffer, of 525 West 136th Street, laughed so much yesterday afternoon at a comedy film in the Clermont Theatre, 137th Street and Broadway, that she dislocated her jaw. A surgeon from Knickerbocker Hospital put it back in place.

It seems too bad, for the sake of the author, not to have mentioned what the picture was.

Then again there are matters of serious consideration that bob up in the Folder. Here is a charming letter from Mr. Henry W. Lanier, editor of *The Golden Book,* who is asking "a thousand professors of literature" for

their suggestions of the "ten works of fiction by American writers which informed judgment would select as worthy of a place in a permanent World Library." With his customary shrewdness, to start the argument Mr. Lanier lists six which "would probably be named with some confidence by most cultivated Americans." The six he lists are Poe's *Tales, The Scarlet Letter, Huckleberry Finn, Uncle Remus, The Last of the Mohicans, Moby Dick.* Now Mr. Lanier knows very well that to a man hunting for excuses to postpone his own MS. it will immediately seem very important to select the right four to finish that list. And so, what with pondering whether *The Last of the Mohicans* ought to be one of six, and debating Bret Harte and Washington Irving and O. Henry and—well, who would you suggest?—for the other four, another half hour is gone in a flash. And the next item is a catalogue from James Brown and Son, the nautical publisher at 52 Darnley Street, Glasgow. It's an old catalogue, dated 1921, and has been in the back of the Folder for years. (Blurbs antiqua fuit, as Virgil almost said.) Long ago, of course, we should have told sea-minded kinsprits that James Brown is the fellow to tie up to for really technical maritime lore. What books he lists—*Brown's Knots and Splices,* by Captain Jutsum (even Brown's authors have a special flavour in their names); Nicholls's *Deviation Questions and Law of Storms; Nautical Cookery Book,* by T. F. Adkins, "specially written for cooks of cargo vessels"; *Shakespeare's Sea Terms Explained,* by Captain W. B. Whall. "Readers will be astonished to find that the plays are so

rich in professionally used terms." *Wafts from the Briny,* "a book of Nautical Poems by Captain James McCurdy." Nautical Pictures, reproduced from paintings of famous Clippers, size 20 x 18—"Shortening Sail for a Squall," "Wet Work in the Waist," etc. All this, you see, introduces you to a whole world of fine business. First thing you know, it's time to go to bed.

This curious and despairing flight from the page to be tackled is one phase of a writer's secret life that the text-books, quite wisely, do not mention. I dare say, however, that it has its service: it means that your stuff isn't yet quite ripe in your mind, and perhaps the hours with the Folder are not wasted. Dr. Canby, in his delightfully clear-headed and helpful little book *Better Writing,* emphasizes the great importance of having your material carefully thought out and mentally organized before you begin. In the case of fiction, however, I am not so sure. A story that always adheres to some prearranged plan is dangerously liable to be lifeless. My experience is that you have some general *feeling* in mind as to what you want to convey. Then, if the characters are vitally conceived, once the thing is well started they carry it on for themselves; often throwing overboard entirely the little scheme you had plotted. You never know, really, what is going to emerge: no one is so aragoto as a creature compelled to write against Time.

VI. THOREAU

WHAT one likes best in Thoreau is his arrogance. The man who remarked that Emerson, shooting at beer-

bottles on an Adirondack vacation, was no better than a cockney picnicker, lived on a high serene of ethical certainty which is good to contemplate. It is true that whiles one finds something a little meagre and frosty in the judgments of those vanished Massachusetts mandarins (I myself like to think of Ralph Waldo popping off the beer-bottles with his fowling-piece). Sometimes one wonders if the ascete and eremite, no matter how exquisite his memoranda on pantheism, was not a mere child in the art of living. For there is a certain furious and tragic merriment in the compromises of modern life: to be ground in the hopper and still extract one's silences and Buddhist interludes. Silence should be something advanced upon and won; not something retreated to. There seems to me something tragically negative, for example, in Thoreau's comment on Whitman—"As for sensuality in *Leaves of Grass,* I do not so much wish that it was not written, as that men and women were so pure that they could read it without harm."

It is true that the most enchantingly acceptable philosophizations have usually been written by celibates. Family men are more wary about uttering these lustrous positivisms. Thoreau's contempt for the audiences to whom he lectured was not, I think, an engaging trait. He could fall in love with a shrub-oak but not with a human being. His idea of lecturing was to read a manuscript essay; he regarded the occasion as a success if the gathering was so dismayed that no one dared speak to him afterward. He was courteous to woodchucks and turtles; but aren't we all? It's being courteous to human beings that requires

Galilean hardihood. He was rather pleased with himself when he chased a straying shoat for hours and finally caught him and wheel-barrowed him home. But isn't that what domestic or metropolitan man has to do every day and all day long? The ineffable greased pig of his secret joy, you can see him pursuing it grimly, under the scarps of terraced buildings or in the bewildering discipline of paternity.

But, as I say, it is for this arrogant and fugitive certainty that one loves Thoreau. He was happy, and therefore his doctrine was true; happiness refutes all argument. One laconic entry in his journal always seems to me specially characteristic. "Aug. 9, 1854. To Boston. *Walden* published. Elder-berries." For his books have just the tart sweetness, the acrid refreshment, of elderberry wine. Perhaps he really knew very little of life; or perhaps he knew more than it is safe for any man to suspect; you can argue it convincingly either way. He left us books that provide one with debate, full of beautiful troubling elixir. Perhaps he was himself a bit like the shrub-oak he fell in love with—"Rigid as iron, clean as the atmosphere, hardy as virtue, innocent as a maiden." He was the man who cried out, when he saw women wearing jewellery, that a pearl was "the hardened tear of a diseased clam, murdered in its old age"; and said, after lecturing in the basement of a church, "I trust I helped to undermine it." If he had been alive, he would certainly have spent 1917-18 in jail.

I had only meant to make a casual allusion to Thoreau, but having got so far I may as well go on a stick or two

further. Some day perhaps I might read some of the books about him; *Walden* and the Journals are my only lore. Odell Shepard's admirable condensation, *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals,* is an anthology alive with the purest bourbon of the mind. If one were a collector, among the books most charming to own would be one of those 706 copies of *A Week on the Concord* which the publisher returned to him as unsalable (about 215 were actually sold, of the first edition of 1000) and which he carried up to his attic. Who ever forgets his immortal memorandum—"I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself."

Speaking as a financier, there is bound to be a bull market in Thoreau. We have seen, in ten years or so, *Moby Dick* rise from about $2½ to $250. The same will very possibly happen to Thoreau, for he has something to say to us that few have ever said quite so definitely. I know two men of letters, both ardent dabblers in speculation, who (being hard up) bought a First of *Walden* jointly, and put it carefully in a safe against the anticipated rise. When the price gets up to $100 they intend to cash in. When that time comes I will tell you who they are.

Thoreau worked for a dollar a day as odd-job man; but his oddest job of all was that of trying to guess the truth.

VII. AN ALPHABET OF THE ABYSS

THE impossible task of saying any fit word to remind the world that William Blake is a hundred years dead,

we can leave to stronger hands. I myself, in respect of the occasion, suggest only two things. First, contemplate a portrait (Linnell's, for instance) of that fine skull and its great dome of Fore Head. It was a Fore Head, not a forehead: a fore-castle in Spain if you prefer: such a brow and arch of pate as our race had also in Shakespeare, honourably denuded by the heat within. Mark the clear but anxious eye, the humorously pliant lips, the tender corrugation of the temples. On that brow there was much to be read between the lines, but it is the noble arch and slope of skull you'll most consider.

Then perhaps, taking one of the less precipitous of his volcanoes, climb up the sides of Songs of Experience and look down into the crater. Fires still burn, slow and deep, in those "indignant pages." He will not fool you with the gay little drawings, the vineyard tracery of his exquisite brush. Even the volcano may have the prettiest arbours and pastures on its green slope. There are 26 poems in that little book, a whole alphabet of the abyss. Perhaps they are integrated on a considered scheme. So it has sometimes seemed. The invocation, calling on Earth to return to her holy innocence, and then Earth's reply that jealousies and fears keep her bound in darkness, introduce a theme that carries on into the Nurse's song. Then, among apparently childish musings comes the immortal Letting in the Jungle, the three poems inhabited by lions and tigers. But Innocence remains the essential motif, until again interrupted by another explosion of elemental fire. The group of four psychological emblems (the Poison Tree, the Angel, the Sick Rose, and

To Tirzah) are as searing as lava, and their meaning lies inside the grope of words. Tirzah even (we see by the facsimile edition duplicated from a British Museum copy) Blake pleased himself by sometimes colouring in a fiery orange tint.

We come back to flowers and children, but the worm is in the heart of the rose, the children are black with soot. It is interesting that the famous sunflower poem, perhaps as flagrantly graphic in suggestion as anything Blake ever did, he left unpictured. Laments for chimney-sweeps do not touch us closely nowadays, until perhaps we remember that here too we have black children of our own and haven't done much for them. As for the Human Abstract, with which he inscrutably and unanswerably concludes, each may well ponder it for himself. Anyone willing to spend an evening with Blake will admit no commentator to intervene. In that companionship three is a crowd.

Perhaps Fuseli made the perfect comment on Blake—"He's damned good to steal from."

VIII. PREFACE TO A HISTORY

A PLEASANT intersection of coördinates at which to begin Our Own Graph of American Literature, it now occurs to me, would be the point where Spring and Oxford met one another in the year 1911. When you walk across Magdalen Bridge, past those April almond trees that blossom as pink as the cheeks of young girls on a windy day, you will find a modest lodging numbered as

19, Iffley Road. In that ground-floor sitting room some entirely care-free young men made what was I think their first actual contact with Contemporary American Literature.

If I were to embark upon this project relentlessly, unsparing of risibles, it would be too voluminous and too intimately painful for all concerned. I compress myself to the discreet gravity of historians. These young men, whose universe was then unmarred by any darkness more imminent than some examinations to arrive two years later, had been cheerfully prosecuting a noble hoax. One of their fellow-students, a prolific artisan of bad verse, had been persuaded that he was the pure seed of genius, the clean corn without a cockle. Meetings were held at which this Bard was worshipped and exalted. His satellites humbly offered their own tributary trifles—sometimes culled from the mere pages of Wordsworth or Robert Bridges—for the Master's appraisal. Enscrolled by flatteries our excellent friend had the time of his life. He was cajoled into delivering a public address upon Poetry; a picked house applauded with violence. A royal decoration was bestowed by an undergraduate masquerading as the Marquis Cascara Sagrada, chamberlain of the Portuguese monarch living exiled in England. The extremities to which this pastime were carried would hardly be believed if set down.

The o'ergrowth of some complexion of which Hamlet speaks has nothing to do with beards. In modern phrase (that of Doctor Joe Collins, perhaps) it means the

sublimation of a complex. Our happy victim's complexion was o'ergrown with a vengeance. He never suspected our deviltry, and lived in the innocent splendour of self-hypnosis. Presently he returned to his native Middle West and resumed his practice of the law.

But it was at one of these prankish symposia that a more important name entered the story. The name of Mr. Ferdinand Pinney Earle, who was spending the spring in Oxford. To Mr. Earle, first encountered over Iffley Road tea-cups, this pack of young irresponsibles looked up with honest excitement. He was an actual poet, had published a tangible book. Mr. Earle entered with hilarity into our spurious sessions with the innocent versifier. I remember a gathering in his big sitting room somewhere in North Oxford where the Middle Western Bard was cajoled into sitting, like Buddha, on a huge cairn of cushions in the centre of the floor while the devotees ranged themselves humbly round the perimeter. As the Master read his deplorable doggerels from the throne, Mr. Earle thrillingly muted strains on his violin. He had to stand with his back toward the mercy-seat to hide his heavy vibrations of laughter.

All this juvenile merriment seems a long way both from America and from Literature. I admit it, but in my own mind the connection is clear. For it was at one of these meetings that Earle told us of the projected scheme for a volume that appeared in 1912 as *The Lyric Year*. A volume in which Edna Millay's "Renascence" took the first prize and T. A. Daly's "The Thrush"

proxime accessit. And that volume can not unreasonably be regarded as a kilometer-mark in the lively refreshment of the Muse that our days have witnessed.

If the above is inadmissable as the historian's starting-point, he likes to think of another picture, precious to no one but himself, which was the genuine beginning of his study of these small matters. It was a clear September afternoon, 1913, when a young man, carrying a suit-case, walked down Madison Avenue from the Grand Central Station to the old brown house that used to stand at the southeast corner of 32nd Street. He was full of that exhilarated solemnity that marks the conscious beginning of a Career. (I see you smiling; but he is smiling too.) He was on his way to look for a job. And he only needed to gaze once upon the tiny Diana, tightening her arrow in the blue, to feel that here was the city of Destiny.

Of course he had earlier memories of that divine city: memories more curious and more splendid. In childhood, coming from Baltimore, almost every summer he had crossed the ferry from Jersey City to Desbrosses Street, to board the Fall River or Albany boats (pavilions of story for young eyes) *en route* for some vacation sojourn. How well he can revive the warm horse aroma of downtown Manhattan in those days, particularly on West Street, (where a little of it lingers even now). The sacramental annual visit, with his father, to Abercrombie and Fitch's —on Reade Street, wasn't it? O those folding hatchets and fishing tackle!

Or, a later memory, there was a lively foray made by a few students from a Pennsylvania athenaeum: simple-

minded lads from the environs of Philadelphia, who had been told that the Haymarket and Little Hungary were the last word in untrammelled revelry. Staunchly they put this tiding to the test. The humours of that excursion, intended by their overseers as a sociological seminar, are too abundant for scanty comment. The expedition was commanded by a grave young ministerial collegian, an accomplished Social Worker, who had been gulled by these rowdy and light-minded creatures. By astounding hypocrisies they had wheedled him into allowing them to accompany this Social Problem troupe, which was to lodge in an East Side "settlement" and investigate orphanages, rescue missions, and gymnasia. It is sad to remember that the disciples slipped away from their pastor when the Promised Land of Sociology was reached. They did accompany him, I think, to some sort of Home for Dishevelled Girls near Tarrytown, which sounded amusing; but otherwise their pockets being picked in Chinatown, Miner's burlesque house, and violent mirth at Little Hungary are their only durable memories.

Or one might speak of coming up New York Bay, a late cold night before Christmas, in the steerage of the *Mauretania*. No one, I insist, really knows New York's manners to the visitor, until he has entered her by steerage. But this particular wooer of the city always thinks of Madison Avenue, that September afternoon, as the first overture of his courtship. For this time he came definitely to face that extraordinary romantic problem (not yet solved, incidentally) of Earning a Living.

IX. FROM BEOWULF TO VIRGINIA WOOLF

JOHN MACY seems to me to have done the almost undoable. He has written a sketch of the world's literature from the beginning down to our own day—from the *chansons de geste* to Edgar Guest, from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf—which is swift, scholarly, informal, and has the true thrill. This is the kind of job that has to be done over and over again, for each generation: sorting over the baggage of the past to see exactly how much of it we absolutely need to carry in our own briefcase. But I don't suppose it has ever been done with more genuine piety and charm. Mr. Macy's briefcase (*The Story of the World's Literature,* 592 pp., $5.00) costs the reader less than one cent a page and gives him enough to ponder for a year. For three months now I have been dipping into it, reading a few pages in bed at midnight, and delighting in the skill and courage with which Macy has tackled this impossible task. He has been so successful because he never thought of it as a task. It is not like many books of that sort, just a manual. It is a cordial: it has the heart of literature beating in it. Jack Macy was the right man to do this book because he understands the continuity of literature: a kind of chain-letter coming down the ages from the unguessable hearts of long ago who had their torments also and hankered to share them: like that mythical "American army officer" who starts all the chain-letters. If you want to know the kind of book this really is, it makes one take a small slip of paper and

write down the things you swear you simply must read or reread—such as *The Arabian Nights, The Golden Ass,* Cæsar's *Gallic War,* Virgil, Malory, Voltaire, Don Quixote, and the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.*

It is a thoroughly humane book, with no unworthy compromise with the scoffish tendency of the age. Jack climbs the beanstalk of scholarship into fairyland, but he does not set out to kill all the Giants. He finds, as we all do, that for the most part the people we have been told were great, really are great. Cicero is not a dull writer just because we were forced to read him immaturely; Burton and Thomas Fuller are just as entrancing as Lamb said they were. The conversational simplicity of Mr. Macy's method, with his lively humour, his shrewd asides, his deep feeling for the profound and tragic emotions, never slips into lack of dignity. He quotes Pascal's great *mot*—"When one sees the natural style one is astonished and delighted; for one expected to find an author and one finds a man." That is what one finds in this book. How fine a sagacity in his remarks by the way—

We who lie on this side of the great romantic period are inclined to discover all the gold and jewels of Donne and his successors and to think that Pope's well moulded metal is not so precious. This is a mistake from the point of view of criticism, from the point of view of pure amateurish enjoyment. Every poet, every artist should be appreciated, judged, treasured by the best that *he* did in *his* kind, no matter what other artists before him or near him or after him may have done. And of excellent specimens of two

different kinds who shall say, who need say which is the better?

The book is delightful precisely because it is written from the standpoint of "pure amateurish enjoyment." "I have been bothered all my life," he tells us, "to determine which are major and which are minor poets." "We need not be abashed by great reputations, and Pamela is little better than what we should now call pretty good moving-picture stuff." "Dr. Johnson's verse is negligible." "It seems to me that Stevenson for all his praise of youth, his gay courage, his scrupulous devotion to art, and his immense popularity, was a reactionary, an old-fashioned man, and that while he was polishing his sentences the fine new thing was being done by another artist who also polished his sentences but had stouter metal to polish, George Gissing. I will stake my reputation on that judgment." It is not necessary to agree with all Mr. Macy's comments: to take merely one instance, the Dr. Johnson who wrote the Prologue for the Drury Lane opening, and the poem about the death of Dr. Levett, does not seem to me a negligible versifier. But I have not found a single judgment in the six hundred pages that is not relishable because one can understand why Mr. Macy feels that way.

There is a fine courage in Mr. Macy's method: he deliberately sets aside what must often have been a strong temptation to linger over his special favourites. He never relaxes the austerity of his intention: to show us the great river of human writing as a constant flowing

stream, not as a succession of items. As he said long ago, in his fine little book on American Literature, "novels are suckled at the breasts of elder novels." And in the good talkative brevity of his tale he strikes off many a spark. Of Meredith, for instance: "He requires for full understanding a reader who can match his brains against the author's, and for that matter so do Shakespeare and every other man of genius." "Let us reiterate one principle on which this brief survey of literature is based—namely, that any intelligent person can read anything ever put on paper without the slightest moral damage. And unintelligent, humorless people are safe because they will not read literature or will not understand what they try to read." There are wonders in the human mind, as Marlowe's great lines remind us, "which into words no virtue can digest," and Macy's summary is hearteningly aware of this. He knows, as so few of the boilers-down of literary history seem to have known, how small a proportion of the world's literature has ever actually got itself written. It surrounds, like a sunset glow, the poor actual shreds and tatters of men's hearts that lie for us, so neatly parallel, on the printed page. Something of this aura, this golden trouble, this feeling of hunger and anger and ecstasy, he has touched into life. He knows that all art is "begotten by Despair upon impossibility."

The other day, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 45th Street, I overheard one man say to another a familiar phrase that is pleasantly expressive of much contemporary psychology. "I got a terrific kick out of it," I heard him say; that was all; I have no notion of the nature of the

impact. It is true that especially just now human nature seems to be eager for whatever can give it this desirable flutter behind the ribs, this warmth on the cheekbones. For those who have learned the great secret that in communion with the vanished hearts of literature lies perhaps the greatest and most delicately durable "kick" of all, Mr. Macy's book will be a happiness. I can imagine that some experienced scholars of world-literature will point to flaws of proportion, to omissions, or sketchiness; but the author himself admits these. The truly important thing is what a too severe scholar might even miss, the subtle dignity of this very colloquial and conversational book. It has the dignity of passion: the dignity of dealing with literature as it deserves, as the living expression of human joy and suffering. It is written in what can only be called a profoundly religious spirit; for these great lives who wrestled for us to say their weirds are the most sacred saints we have. A woman told me that when she saw the words "O rare Ben Johnson" on the stone in Westminster Abbey (it is spelled there with an h) her eyes were wet. That was the true spirit of religion. That is the religion that Mr. Macy understands. His book is full of it; it ends with the word Amen; and, however absurd it may seem to the cynical, the feeling that it often implants in the reader is the humble prayer that he too, even in his littleness and perplexity, might somehow strive to add something to this noble story of men's hearts. So it is not only a briefcase, but a breviary.

IN BED

I KNOW very little about the way people behave in bed. I have so rarely been ill, indeed I might almost say I have so rarely gone to bed at all, in the way a good routine bedgoer does it, that I feel very amateurish in this subject (as in all others). And human beings in any unfamiliar situation always rather hanker to know what is the customary behaviour under those circumstances, even if they don't intend to imitate it. What would Emily Post (if that is her name? I mean the Etiquette lady) do? Call for Clicquot Club ginger ale, I suppose.

But it has struck me as a very odd, even valuable experience, to be laid up (or rather, laid down) in bed (this is the fourth day) in a strange room in my own house; in the only room which, normally, I hardly ever enter. (The guest room.) It is a very quaint sensation and everything conspires to make it delightful, at any rate now that first sensation of having been squashed by a motor truck has faded. I do not mean that I have actually been so squashed; but those who have been properly gripped will remember that that is what it feels like. Doctor J, enchanting person, says it is poison in the periosteum; and I like his word, too, for mustard plasters. Cataplasms, he calls 'em, with a twinkle. Titania, I think, enjoys preparing mustard plasters; she tells me she mixes

them over the wood fire in the livingroom; with the same exhilaration, I'm sure, that she has in toasting marshmallows or cooking fudge or welsh rabbit; and I should think that welsh rabbit would make a very interesting cataplasm. I can't verify that word because the Concise Oxford Dictionary (which should be in every guest room) lets me down badly: it hasn't got the word at all. I implored Doctor J not to take Titania's temperature readings too literally; as an old New Yorker, she believes the thermometer is like the subway and has no stops between 96 and 103; but certainly her nursing is effective: I heard her telephoning *The Saturday Review* this morning, "I think he's losing his grippe." The result of all this is to make me renew my very old intention to own and study the great book I once dipped into, Doctor Osler's *Principles and Practice of Medicine*. Certainly it is not right that authors, who pretend to deal with the motives and subtleties of human life, should be so ignorant of plain physiology. I always have much more confidence in writers (Chekhov, for instance) who know something about medicine.

One of the interesting things about this bedfast condition is that the mind runs rapidly through a symbolic graph of human progress. The first thirty-six hours or so of a good lively grippe it is nowhere; it is merely a grunt at the bottom of a dark bag. Then it becomes capable of such matter as the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. There it prowls among the fiction, wishing perhaps that everyone could write as entertainingly and ruthlessly as Ring Lardner; and wondering whether some sort of

Salic law could be framed excluding Fannie Hurst from writing fiction until she has exorcised her present diaphoretic style. I read in one of Mr. Knopf's notices that Miss Hurst is going to study at Oxford; and if so, I prescribe for her while there a large emolument of Jane Austen. At this stage of the illness, of course, some first-class mystery fiction would be ideal—my mind reverted tenderly to those new dollar editions of a couple of Earl Biggers's excellent yarns ("The Agony Column" and another)—but there was nothing of that sort in the house that I hadn't read. The advertising pages of the *Cosmopolitan* are interesting matter for a slightly feverish mind: it is curious to try to evolve some synthesis of them. That little anthology of feminine concerns offers extraordinary sociological data for future philosophers. Mr. Joad, for instance, what an essay he could write on American civilization based on dandruff, pyorrhea, listerine, and the kissproof lipstick.

Rallying a little I had a go at *Tom Sawyer,* succumbed to its charm just as I had when I last read it more than twenty years ago, and yet somehow felt that vague disappointment I have had in all my rereadings of Mark Twain. Kipling needn't have been so prostrate before Mark: surely *The Jungle Book* is great where *Tom Sawyer* is only charming. There were some of Emerson's essays on the guest room shelf and by now I was competent for these. That's what I call reading! I remember how blankly I conned them at the age of sixteen, reading a page several times without the slightest ripple on my guileless cortex. Yes, they seemed indeed (as Carlyle gorgeously

said) "solid bags of duck-shot." But try him now, say on The Over-Soul, or on Montaigne. You lie under your blankets strangely at ease, afloat among the pleasant naïve thoughts of random idleness. This Emerson, this pure and high and temperate spirit, looked as deeply and generously into life as any of the great scalawags and scoundrels. Has anyone ever written the kind of Life of him that would tell just How and Why he learned his gnomic secrets? Any one of the pellets in those bags of duck-shot will do to bring down a blue bird.

The chief disadvantage of these small disorders is that they make one's pipe taste so beastly. It has the same loathsome gust as in those horrible days when I had flu, at Wyncote, in the autumn of 1918; but when, for some perversion of conscience that I can't now explain, I didn't believe it possible to quit my job for more than a day or two and tottered in and out of Philadelphia in a stupor. I associate that time with a poem by Phoebe Hoffman which I printed in my column in the *Evening Ledger* when I was too dead to write anything myself: a poem about a child walking with cold bare feet on sharp red pebbles: I always think of that poem when my pipe tastes as it did the last few days. Of course as soon as it begins to taste a little better the bed gets all crumby with scraps of tobacco and you are glad enough to climb out. But it started me thinking of those admirable days and friends in the old Ledger building, of all the wonderful stuff that every man has in his memory, so much more racy and enchanted than any fiction or fable and yet it so rarely gets told. What is it Emerson quotes from Montaigne—"Five

or six as ridiculous stories can be told of me as of any man living." Of whom is this not true? Even of Colonel House, I dare say. I hear that he has admitted the authorship of *Philip Dru,* and someone writing in the *Tribune* says that everyone should read that preposterous book. I can't go and rummage for my copy until I am vertical again, but it was always my Dark Horse for the world's worst novel. The only time I ever met the Colonel was at a reception to Joseph Conrad, and I said to him (with cheerful recklessness) that it was pleasant to see the world's best and worst novelists in the same room; he got the point at once, and looked gravely offended, as I suppose was natural. He does not realize that novelists speak to one another much more frankly than politicians.

You lie in bed, turning some of these trifles over in your mind, and wonder if a time will come when we too "will see, no longer blinded by our eyes." For it is odd that here where sight is myopic and ears are thick with wax and tongues furry and fingers tough with callous, we should confide so completely to these imperfect senses. These happy organs are useful as feelers to introduce us to realities that can only be thoroughly explored by senses more delicate still. In reading a book often you slide past a passage whose importance you hardly realize as you read; but afterward something accidentally happens to bring it back to your thoughts and you know how significant it was, but you can't quite remember it or find it again. It is the sense of distinguishing these importances when first encountered that is the kind of quality you perceive so beautifully in Emerson.

"O believe," he says, "that every sound that is spoken over the round world, which thou oughtest to hear, will vibrate on thine ear." Certainly I have always observed that the books I have had an instinctive premonition about always arrive just when I want them. Here, for example, from Macmillan, and trudged through snow from the post office by Titania, comes Miguel de Unamuno—the salamander of Salamanca—and such a delightful title, *The Tragic Sense of Life*. My temperature is normal, the pipe begins to taste more like itself, and I'm going to tackle Miguel at once.

HINDS LET LOOSE

(January, 1926)

IT STRUCK me as curious that the day that Frank Munsey died was also the day that C. E. Montague retired from the editorship of the Manchester *Guardian*. There was evidently some equity in this, for one of these events was probably a great gain to journalism and the other certainly a great loss. The boy from the Western Union and the boy from Balliol entered the world of print about the same time, and how curiously different their influence on the journalism of our era. I never even saw Munsey and I am convinced, from what those who knew him tell me, that he had delightful qualities. His precautious gift of money to a cathedral assured him of sepulture in full aroma of sanctity. President and Bishop gave him a good send-off across the Styx. Nor was it even quite true, to say—as did *The New Yorker,* which has recently begun the admirable practice of commenting candidly on the daily press—that "he aroused the bitterest animosities of any man who ever engaged in the business of printing news." For I know at least one of his former employees, a man of rich talent, who had genuine affection for Munsey and even thought of dedicating one of his own books to him.

But whatever the man's charms and oddities, there can be no doubt that his dealings with journalism were huckstering, bucket shopping: and his newspaper properties were merely incidentals toward his private passion for social *éclat*. A famous artist once told me of the time he worked doing drawings for Munsey forty years ago, in a tiny office down town. One evening Munsey invited him to dinner at his hotel, and after the meal, conversation flagging, said "Would you like to watch me ride horseback?" The surprised young draughtsman assented; they went together to Durland's where Munsey mounted a gigantic nag and rode solemnly round and round the tanbark ring while his employee stood by and pondered. If the camera may be trusted Munsey had the face of the perfect Stage Englishman, and to be a Master of Hounds may have been his dearest hope. And, in the City Room, he was. Often, driving past his estate between Manhasset and Roslyn, I have seen elderly and pensive horses, with gouty knees and sombre profiles, gazing sadly over the fence; and have wondered if they were old newspaper men, turned by black arts into these tragic quadrupeds. So the Durland hobby went on, I suppose, through life; and only a horseman could have created so many hacks. But he had the epitaph he would have coveted: "He died at the Ritz."

This is not maliciously intended; Munsey was, I doubt not, a lovable person among his convivials; he was a part of the jovial human comedy that we can all relish as long as it does not bear too savagely on ourselves. Never having had any personal doings with him I feel for his memory the

perfectly affectionate disrespect that I feel for any other broker in other men's brains. His genius let no one doubt; he did even more than Joshua; he not merely made the *Sun* stand still, he made it go backwards. But it is important to keep certain distinctions clear, and not allow mere magnitude of obit-space to darken the mind of the simple. I have yet to hear of a newspaper man who says he was emboldened by Munsey to do some fine, delicate, or unpopular thing. Munsey was a gold-digger and he wanted his menials to be that too. Whereas in the case of a man like Montague, obscure pressmen all over the English-writing world have been heartened and purified by his rare honour and wit. There is a quaint contrast in these two men departing from journalism on the same day: the man who wanted to be seen on horseback, the man who climbs mountains solitary on foot. But, lest we be misunderstood, I hasten to add that Mr. Montague has retired from daily editorship to devote himself chiefly to his books; he has gone to live not at a Ritz but near a stone-quarry in Oxfordshire.

At a farewell dinner given Mr. Montague by his colleagues of the Manchester *Guardian,* Mr. C. P. Scott, the greatly loved chief of that paper, told the story of how Montague got his newspaper job. It specially pleases me because the same skit that caught Mr. Scott's eye thirty-five years ago was also the thing, reprinted in *Echoes from the Oxford Magazine,* that first introduced me, in 1910, to the magic initials C. E. M. I think some of the things said about Mr. Montague at that dinner

are worth reprinting from the *Guardian:* Mr. Scott was quoted:—

Before Mr. Montague left them they wanted to thank him for all he was, and all he had done, for his high temper, his political courage, the unswerving stand he had ever made for liberty, his deep and critical understanding of literature, the drama, and the fine arts, for the crystal clearness of his style, and its wonderful vigour and vividness, for the model he had set before them of English pure and undefiled. Those were great gifts, and for thirty-five years he had devoted them to the service of the paper.

He (Mr. Scott) remembered as though it were yesterday the first day Mr. Montague came to the office, though he could little know then what it would mean to him and to the paper. He was engaged without being seen. What decided the matter was a little skit written by him in the *Oxford Undergraduates' Magazine* of the time, a description of an inter-collegiate bumping boat-race, written in the manner of Thucydides. It was the most delightful parody he (Mr. Scott) had ever read, and he judged that the writer of it must have a lively wit. He was right. Mr. Montague had put life and wit into the *Manchester Guardian* ever since. At one period of its existence there were ribald persons who averred that it had no more notion of a joke than an oyster. From the moment of Mr. Montague's advent that was a pleasantry no man dared be guilty of. The particular commandment laid upon journalists, "Thou shalt not be dull," was henceforth religiously observed.

Their friend and companion of many years was entering on a new life. A newspaper was a greedy thing; it devoured its own children: their life was lost in its larger life. In England, by custom and tradition, writers for the press were anonymous, but Mr. Montague could never succeed in being anonymous. Do what he might, to those who knew him

everything he wrote bore his signature all over. But for the larger public the personality of even the most distinctive writer was merged in that of the paper for which he wrote. Only in his books did he become completely himself. Mr. Montague had lived both lives—the life of the journalist and the life of the author, he had lived them hard—and he had lived them together. His was a crowded life. Now, after all those years, he was seeking, as he well might, leisure for his books. Whatever the future might have in store for him the past at least was securely his, a past of great and honourable achievement, and of devotion to the public good. The paper of the day might die with the day, but its work if well done (as Mr. Montague had done his work), did not die; it entered into the life of the nation and helped to direct its mind and shape its destiny. That was a great task and a glorious one. Mr. Montague had had his full share in it, and could look back on it with pride.

So the Hind is Let Loose. Even the memory of so fine a tribute will not be enough to keep him from a loneliness; those who have lived such departures merely in microcosm know it dour to abandon the intense and jocund life of newspapers with its relishable fellowships and keen sense of existence. And Montague has loved newspapers as only those can who are sharply critical of them, and as only those can who have worked in a journalism that is more than a kind of chain grocery system. Montague has been their Best Friend and Severest Critic, and I believe his own personal achievement, both in quantity and quality, is unique in our time. Besides the half dozen extraordinary books, and even deducting from his newspaper acreage the Shakespearean allusions which are the trademark of the authentic C. E. M. editorial, there remains a body of

wit, of passionate liberalism, of flashing criticism, of quicksilver humour, that has been surpassed by no ephemeralist in our time. With those editorials vanished, where now can we go—as H. W. Nevinson said at the dinner—to select those beautiful quotations we have so often paraded as our own?

When the grocer enters journalism, he does not change his coat; as the old rhyme has it, he grows a grosser grocer. But remembering the Montagues, we can afford to forget, even feel just a little sorry for, the Capulets.

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